

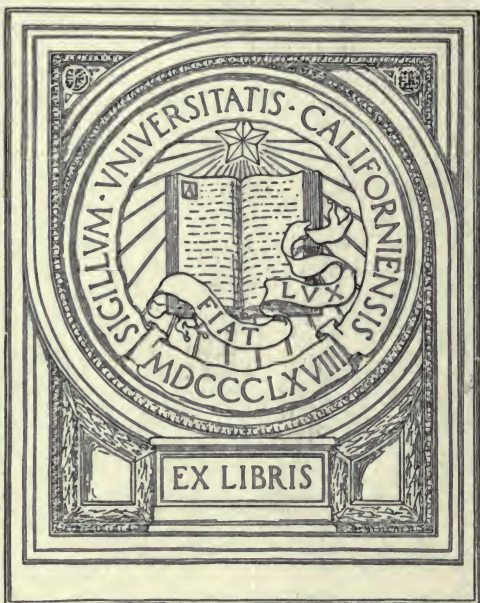
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ACT 1.

Scene 1.—JOB ARMROD'S COTTAGE.

Scene 2.—BLEAKMORE.

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LONDON.

ACT 2.

Scene 1.—Interior of the Ferns Villa in Regent's-park.

Scene 2.—ANTE ROOM AT THE FERNS VILLA.

Scene 3.—Exterior of the Ferns Villa (by Night)

Scene 4.—Ante Room at the Ferns Villa.

Scene 5.—BALL ROOM.

ACT 3.

Interior of a Cottage in the Neighbourhood of London.

LOST IN LONDON.

ACT I.

SCENE FIRST.—*Interior of Job Armroyd's cottage. At back, a large latticed window and door. Another door, R. Same side, further up stage, a huge fireplace. To L., a press, beside it a beer barrel on stand. In window, a wicker cage, containing a blackbird. Between door and window at back, and against wall, hang a variety of mining implements and a safety lamp, in another part of room, a Dutch clock. On window sill, a pot filled with heath in blossom. There is no ceiling, but from crossbeams that support roof are suspended a couple of stiches of bacon, and several ropes of onions. The other furniture of the room very homely and rough. On table, which is covered by a white cloth, (coarse) NELLY ARMROYD is arranging JOB's breakfast, consisting of bread, cold boiled bacon, and cheese. The clock strikes six.*

NELLY. Six o'clock! Job's late this morning. It'll be the first time these four months he's seen the sun rise. There's no change of season for the poor miner. Summer or winter, it's one endless night. (*while speaking she fills a huge black jack, or tankard, with ale from barrel, and places it on table*) It's a dreary life—a miner's! (*she sighs*) And it's a dreary life to be a miner's wife—to sit o' nights a listening to the wind wailing out o' doors, or rumbling i'

the chimney, or to go a wandering i' the day ow'r the bleak moorland, which even the birds seem to shun. (*she seats herself, or rather sinks into a chair*) And yet a word of mine can change all this into a life as gay, as bright, and as full of happiness, as this is dreary and desolate. But that word I cannot speak! I dare not speak it! (*she rests her arm on table, covering her face with her hands. JOB heard singing in inner room. She hurriedly wipes her eyes and looks up*) He is so happy, too—happy in his love for me—for me. (*the singing inside room strikes into a louder and merrier key—NELLY rises*) Job! Job! my husband! save me from this man! Save me from myself! (*as she makes a step or two towards door a loud tapping is heard at cottage window. She pauses with a gesture of alarm.*)

VOICE. (*outside window*) Nelly! Nelly!

NELLY. Heaven help me! He is here! (*the lattice is opened, and GILBERT FEATHERSTONE is seen leaning upon window sill. His appearance that of the town bred man of fashion. He is young and handsome, wears a blonde moustache and beard, carefully trimmed à la mode.*)

GILBERT. Is the coast clear! Can I enter?

NELLY. (*with a gesture of alarm, and approaching window*) Mr. Featherstone, sir, I entreat you.

GILBERT. What's the matter? Have you seen anything of my rascal, Blinker? I sent him to— (*the singing, which had ceased, is renewed, and heavy footsteps heard in room to L. GILBERT, who has been leaning into room, draws back, half closing lattice*) Who's that?

NELLY. (*in much agitation*) My husband!

GILBERT. King Coal, not gone yet! The devil! (*he hastily closes window as JOB ARMROYD lifts the latch of door to left, and puts head into room, while NELLY, to hide her agitation, bends over the flowers in window as arranging them, singing the while with a strained assumption of carelessness.*)

JOB. Sing away, lass! sing away! (*he laughs and shakes his head with an expression of broad good humour*) I allays say o' thee an' Billy th' blackbird, that there is'na another two such pipes to be found in th' county, an' my heart al'ays beats time to the music o' thy tongue. (*he pushes door open, and enters, still laughing. He is a fine rough-looking specimen of his class. His face is full of frankness and good humour, and his general appearance that of a hale, strong man in his fiftieth year. He holds in his hand a clumsy looking razor, and in the other a towel—with the*

latter he, while speaking, wipes off the soap lather from his face.)

JOB. *(laughing and holding out razor)* Look'ee here, Nelly! That whirl 'um gig Tiddy a' been chopping wood wi' my razor ag'in. She be most as bad as Tom Moorhead's gell, who opened a hunder o' oysters wi' his'en—but Tom's such a soft muzzled chap, he never found it out till told on't. *(he laughs and rubs chin)* Mine's a rasper! *(he takes coat from wall, and is putting it on, laughing and chuckling when looking up he sees NELLY's face. Struck by its expression his mirth vanishes, and he crosses quickly to her, his manner marked by much homely tenderness)* What's cast thee down, lass? Art grievin' cos thy old playmate Tiddy Draggleshorpe be goin' to Lunnon to tek service an' better her'sen?

NELLY. *(pettishly, and moving away)* I wasn't thinking o' Tiddy. I daresay she's happy enough to quit this lonesome life for London.

JOB. Whoi, Nell, what a lot o' gibberish thee'st talkin'. The lass were born here, and it ain't natur' for th' bird to scorn th' nest in which 'twas hatched. *(he takes loaf from table, and prepares to cut a slice, laughing as he does so)* The Lunnoners may try till they're toired, but they'll no more mek one o' theer foine birds out o' Tiddy Draggleshorpe than ye can turn a moor hen into a singin' bird by sticken 'un into a goolden cage, and fiddlin' to't. Whoi, all th' lords and ladies in Parliament could'na do't.

NELLY. *(sighs)* It's a lonesome life, nevertheless, Job.

JOB. *(pausing in the middle of cutting the slice, and looking at NELLY in open-eyed astonishment)* Lonesome! Thee dunna mean it to be thee that's lonesome, Nelly? Happen I a' done summut to worrit thee now? I'm but a slow koind o' a blunderin' chap, as is allays a' stumblin' ower somebody's shins unbeknown loike. so you must foind head for us both, Nelly, head for us both. *(he puts down loaf, and looks at her with a sort of awkward sadness)* I'm an old chap alongside o' thee, Nelly, and twenty year wunna allays think loike fifty.

NELLY. *(quickly)* Oh! 'tisn't that, Job! indeed, 'tisn't that! *(slowly)* Only I do think sometimes it would be so pleasant to live in London. *(she looks down, smoothing apron, so as to conceal her face from JOB, whose countenance still wears a blank, puzzled look)* To see, and know more o' the world.

JOB. *(his face clearing up)* See Lunnon! Bless'ee lass,

thee'd'st be glad enough to get away fro't. (*he takes up loaf, and cuts off a huge slice*) Theer were my feyther, who'd worked in the pit, man and boy, for sixty year, an' should a' known somethin' o' th' world; well, *he* went to Lunnon, an' (*he gives a contemptuous flourish with knife*) thought nothin' o't! (*cuts bread and eats.*)

NELLY. (*eagerly*) What did he say, Job?

JOB. (*eating and speaking slowly*) Say! whoi, he said, that arter bein' theer for more nor two weeks—— (*he pauses.*)

NELLY. Well, Job?

JOB. (*impressively*) He could'na mek head nor tail o't.

NELLY. What did he see, Job?

JOB. Not much. For what wi' th' clatter an' th' jabber, he wur sure to lose his 'sen in th' day time, so he niver stirred out till all t' folk were in bed, an' he could walk about wi'out a breakin' something, or a treadin' on somebody.

NELLY. (*half laughing*) He didn't see much then?

JOB. Well, he got a-nigh drowned, for t'were November time, an' as t' fog were prutty thick, he were allays a-walkin' into th' river. Th' third time they pulled un out, he'd enough o' Lunnon, an' started for hoame th' next mornin'. (*he drinks from tankard*) "Job," said he to me, when he found his'sen once more a workin' quite comfortable down in th' pit, "Job, dunna thee gi'e no heed to trav'lers lies, better lose thy'sen down here among th' workin's wi'out a lamp, than be adrift in that theer Lunnon, an' no one to gi'e thee a helpin' hand."

NELLY. But the mine—think o' the dangers o' the mine, Job?

JOB. True, lass, true, the mine has its faults, o' coorse. Theer's the choke damp as blots out a man's life afore he can lift an eyelid to see o' which side th' death's comin'. Then theer's the fire damp, as scorches a stout lad into a cinder. But nothin's perfect, Nelly, so we mun tek the rough wi' th' smooth. (*he approaches her, and places his hand kindly on her arm*) But thee'st cause to be afeard of the mine, Nelly—it robbed thee of a feyther, a'most afore thou wert old enough to know the vally on 'un.

NELLY. (*her eyes fixed on the ground, and face slightly averted*) Ah, Job, it was a sad burden o' trouble he left you in me.

JOB. Trouble! (*he takes both her hands in his, and, with gentle violence, forces her to look into his face*) What's gotten

into thy noddle, lass? Thou'st never made trouble for no one as belonged to 'ee, least of all to Job Armroyd. Dunna cry, my birdy, dunna cry, I love to see thy cheeks red, not thy eyes. (*he leans over her, and kisses her forehead.*)

TIDDY. (*heard singing outside, and passing window*)

Oi've clogs an' a box full o' clo'o'o'as,
Just sixpence and tuppence in brass,
A heart for frien's, a fist for fo'o'o'es,
Loike a farrantly Lancashire lass. (*bis.*)

JOB. Here's Tiddy! Come to say good bye. They'll be in luck as she teks sarvice wi'. There ain't many such to be met in Lunnon, I'm thinkin', big as 'tis. (*the door of cottage opens, and TIDDY DRAGGLETHORPE, appears on threshold. She is a strapping, red cheeked, angular specimen of the genuine Lancashire breed. Her hair drawn back from face, and done up in a large and extremely ragged knot. She is dressed in a very large patterned gown, short in the waist, and with shoulder of mutton sleeves. Beneath the gown a portion of the petticoat is visible, and beneath the petticoat her ankles clothed in coarse knitted blue stockings. She wears upon her feet a pair of Lancashire clogs, which she clatters as she walks. A shawl is tied loosely over her shoulders, so as to give free play to her arms, and one end of it is allowed to draggle on the ground behind her. In her hand she carries an umbrella of huge proportions, with a bundle—a bandbox is also slung from her arm. She halts on the threshold, crosses her hands over crook of umbrella, and bending nearly double, bursts into an inordinate fit of laughter, in which JOB, (L.) smiting his hands upon his knees, immediately joins, and even NELLY, (R.) in a modified degree, catches the infection.*)

TIDDY. Wull, lad! wull, Nelly! I be coom to say good bye to 'ee! haw! haw!

JOB. (*still laughing*) Thee dunna seem like to croi aboot it.

TIDDY. (*wiping eyes with end of shawl*) Croi! oi croid all naight till my oies were as big as that. (*making motions with hands*) An' I should a' croid all th' mornin', but Jack Longbones as carried my box croid all the way here, so o' coorse that sot me off laffin, and haw! haw! haw! when once I get on that road I canna stop. If foine feathers make foine birdz, I be a rare one. (*holding arms wide*) All th' village ha' gotten up an hour earlier to have a look at

oi afore I staart, so I ha' promised to show my 'sen at all their houses, poor things. But (*showing bundle, which she places on chair*) I shall come back here, Nelly, to put on th' old gown and shawl afore gettin' on th' coach, or I should be spoilt long afore I got to Lunnon. (*she comes laughing down stage with bonnet box, which she plumps down in centre of stage, between JOB and NELLY, at the same time looking from one to the other in triumph*) Guess what I gotten here, Nelly; or no, let Job try.

JOB. (*smiling and shaking head*) Some artificials, or fly aways, I be bound.

NELLY. (*peeping as TIDDY slowly raises the lid*) It's a bonnet.

TIDDY. O' course it is! They told I, if I didn't want foulk to stare I mun wear a bonnet in Lunnon. So Betty Floyd, who's bin a month in service at Shuttleville, an' knows all th' fashions, lent I a hond wi' un. Here it is! (*she draws forth bonnet, which she holds up in triumph. It is a wildly grotesque bit of invention—coal scuttle in shape and gaudily trimmed. NELLY laughs behind her hand, but JOB, who seems struck by the elegance of the structure, examines the bonnet on every side with evident admiration.*)

JOB. (*rubbing his chin with evident admiration, his gaze still rivetted*) It be a beauty sure-ly, but, I say, lass, I'm a thinkin' none but born'd gentlefolks wear such hots as that.

NELLY. (*quickly*) Oh! no! the ladies who came to Shuttleville last year wi' old Sir Gilbert wore little bit bonnets as light an' as white as apple blossoms.

TIDDY. Bless 'ee, lass! them sort o' people can wear onything, but a lonesome lass loike I must'na make herself pecooliar 'mong strangers. (*replaces bonnet in box*) 'Thof if I'd such a face as thine, Nelly, oi'd be sure to please everybody, no matter what I wear'd.

NELLY. For shame, Tiddy!

TIDDY. On'y yesterday I heerd Mester Featherston say to th' manager that Job Armroyd's wife had better reason to perk her'sen afore a lookin' glass than ha'f the foine town ladies.

NELLY. (*confused*) Hold your foolish tongue, Tiddy!

JOB. (*laughing uproariously and smiting his sides*) Thee'st no call to redden, my lass! thee'st no call to redden. We mun show Mester Featherstone we a gotten good looks as well as good foulk in t' county.

TIDDY. I met un in th' lane just now, an' thout he'd coom fro' th' cottage.

JOB. (*going to table*) He 'a na' bin here, but he wur here last naight, an' t' naight afore that, a waitin' for my comin' home. He be main coorious to know 'bout mining matters, be Mester Featherstone. A civil soft spoken lad as knows a mort, tho' he be town born an bred. (*bell of the works heard ringing in the distance*) Theer goes th' first bell! (*JOB takes down lamp and mining implements, then crosses to NELLY, TIDDY having gone up stage to look out at door*) Good bye, my wench. (*he kisses her, and, placing his hands upon her shoulders, looks lovingly into her face*) Mester Featherstone was 'na far fro' th' truth, Nelly. Thee'st a face as pleasant to look on as that bit o' heaven I often see shining up o' top o' th' shaft wi' just a glimmer o' stars in it.

TIDDY. (*at door*) Theer be Jack Longbones! a' sittin' on th' box jest wur I left un. (*she laughs*) Haw! haw! haw! he do look miserable, sure-ly. (*she comes down stage*) Here be some o' th' lads, Job.

JOB. Hegh! th' bell's rung. I mun be goin'. (*he is moving towards the door, when JACK LONGBONES, DICK RAINE, NOAH MOORHEAD, and several other MINERS enter. They all wear the pitman's costume, with candles (unlighted) in their hat-bands. They are rough, stalwart, hirsute-looking fellows, and enter tumultuously, laughing, and pushing before them BENJAMIN BLINKER, a diminutive, but extremely pompous specimen of the London tiger. He is habited in a green laced frock, leather breeches, and top boots.*)

BLINKER. (*as the MINERS push him before them to centre of stage*) Now then! now then! do yer want me to do some on yer an injury? (*he cocks his hat, and puts his arms a-kimbo—aside*) Poor devils! 'tish't hoften they see a man like me in these parts. (*he proceeds to arrange his toilette, whistling the while "Champagne Charley" with an air of great nonchalance.*)

JOB. (*who is regarding BLINKER with puzzled astonishment*) What kind o' thing hast bro't wi' 'ee, Dick Raine? Sure it wur niver grow'd hereabouts.

RAINE. (*removing his hat and scratching his head dubiously*) I canna rightly guess what 'tis. Happen it be some sort o' insect; it looks loike one and speaks furrin'.

BLINKER. (*aside*) Brubarians! Ain't never seed a gen'l'-man in livery afore? How shall I catch the heyo of th' missus? (*he continues to whistle, and endeavours to attract NELLY's attention without being seen by the others.*)

LONG. I see it a stannin' on its two legs, a tryin' to peep

into your winder, Job. So, thinks I, happen that poer creetur's forgotten theer's a door; an' wishing to be polite to a stranger, I teks 'un gently up by th' scruff o' th' neck an' brings 'un in wi' me.

TIDDY. (*aside to NELLY*) It be that little toad Blinker, as be allays a worriffin' an' a coortin' o' me! (*coming forward and speaking to MINERS*) This be Mester Featherstone's toiger, as they call 'un.

BLINKER. 'Ow d'ye do, Miss D? (*aside*) Fine grow'd young ooman that!

TIDDY. An' I wish you'd drag 'un thro' th' horse pond.

BLINKER. (*aside*) Decided character too.

JOB. Toiger! He be more like a grasshopper. (*all laugh.*)

BLINKER. Bless yer! I ain't a bit hoffended! (*urbanely*) 'Appy to contribute to the amusement o' the lower classes. 'Tain't your fault you're pignorant, how could it be? You can't dig up politeness with a pick haxe.

LONG. Ignorant! What do you mean? (*he advances on BLINKER, who retreats quickly, so as to place TIDDY between them.*)

BLINKER. Don't disturb yourself, my man! Miss D's friends are priweleged, but I've a huncle who's been in the ring; the P.R., you know, (*doubling fists*) and biceps run in the family. (*he extends right arm, and manipulates muscle, knowingly.*)

JOB. (*with others, staying* LONGBONES) Lave 'un aloon, Jack, theer's nothin' i' th' creetur worse nor his tongue. (*BLINKER takes advantage of the momentary withdrawal of attention from himself to draw a letter from his pocket, and endeavours to pass it to NELLY. It falls to the ground; and NELLY, whose manner exhibits great agitation, places her foot quickly upon it, without its being seen by the others. JOB, seizing BLINKER by the arm, and pulling him forward, just as that gentleman is coughing and winking to attract NELLY's attention*) Now tell us who owns ye? What are ye chowkin' ower? (*turns and sees TIDDY*) Is it Tiddy Draggleshorpe?

BLINKER. (*aside*) Wonder whether Mrs. A.'s picked up the billy! (*to JOB, who shakes him roughly by the arm*) You'd better take care, my man, I don't wish to be rough with you, but —

JOB. (*shaking him*) Were it oi ye wanted to see?

BLINKER. No. (*aside*) The meeting's quite unexpected.

JOB. (*shaking him*) Who were it then?

BLINKER. (*aside*) Now for a bouncer! (*aloud*) Her!!!

(*he points to TIDDY, who is lifting a box. She drops it with an exclamation of astonishment.*)

TIDDY. Me!!!

BLINKER. (*aside*) Must keep it up! (*aloud, and sidling over to TIDDY, while NELLY, unobserved, picks up note, which she thrusts in her bosom*) We'd an apintment, jist to say good bye, an' see her hoff, yer know. (*aside to TIDDY*) Hush! it's hall right; hintentions 'onorable, I assure you, Miss D.

TIDDY. A 'pintment wi' oi! Why you little maggot.

BLINKER. (*with gratified smile*) Fond creetur'! Can't hide her feelin's. (*aside to TIDDY*) It's all right! I hain't huffeded.

TIDDY. (*indignantly*) What's all raight? Get away wi' 'ee, blinkin' at me in that fashion, loike an owl i' an ivy tod!

BLINKER. (*aside, with fervour*) She's a splendid woman! such a flow! and such muscle! (*she gives him so smart a push, that he reels back and falls with a crash upon the bonnet box, which is crushed to a pancake.*)

TIDDY. My bonnet!!! (*she snatches up box. MINERS laughing.*)

BLINKER. (*rising*) Re-e-markable woman! Great strength o' mind! (*rubbing himself*) and arm! (*he retreats before the infuriated TIDDY, who still holds box by cord*) What a biceps! (*he ducks to avoid blow, and bolts out of door pursued by TIDDY, who first flings box after him. The MINERS crowd up to door, laughing and clapping hands. Bell rings.*)

LONG. (*to JOB*) Be aloive, lad! that's the second bell. (*MINERS go out. Bell to continue ringing. JOB collects tools, takes down hat, and approaches NELLY, who stands leaning against table, her hand pressed tightly upon her bosom, and her eyes bent upon the ground.*)

JOB. (*half serious, half laughing*) I dunna know what's come ower me o' late, I used to be th' first down in th' pit, an' now I'm loike to be th' last. Somehow, when thou talk'st o' bein' lonesome loike a sort o' cloud seems to arise atween us. (*he places his hand upon her arm*) 'Thee must'na take me unkind, Nelly, if my ways dunna quite fit wi' thine o' times. I be made o' rougher stuff, I know. but theer's a bit o' pure metal here, Nelly, (*he places his hand upon his breast*) as is allays to be found by thee. (*kisses her on forehead, and is moving towards door.*)

NELLY. (*catching him by sleeve*) Job, do not go! Stay with me!

JOB. (*laughing*) Stay wi' 'ee? Nay, nay, that munna

be. Thee would'st na a' Job Armroyd's name get a cross to't as a lag behind.

VOICES OF MINERS. (*outside window*) Job! Job!

JOB. Comin' lads! comin'! (*he good humouredly releases himself from NELLY's grasp, and goes up stage.*)

NELLY. (*as moved by a sudden impulse*) Job! Job! I must speak. Let me speak now. (JOB, who is at door, turns as struck by a something in her voice, and comes a step or two down stage; at same moment LONGBONES appears on threshold.)

LONG. Job! the bell's stopped!

JOB. To-naight, Nelly, to-naight! thee shalt tell me all thy troubles to-naight! (*he exits hastily with LONGBONES. NELLY stands for a moment, her arms outstretched, as in appeal, then sinks into chair, and covers her face with her hands.*)

CHORUS OF MINERS. (*outside house*)

“Down in the depths o' th' darksome mine,
We work thro' a changeless night,
That comfort round English hearths may shine,
And the coal blaze warm and bright.
And the coal blaze warm and bright.”

(*As their rough voices die away in the distance, L., NELLY, who has raised her head to listen, springs to her feet.*)

NELLY. Oh! fool! fool! that I have been to listen to the voice of the tempter, and oh! accursed vanity of woman that gave to that voice such power! (*she draws letter from bosom, opens it, and appears to read a few lines—the letter falls from her hands, which she raises for a moment, then presses convulsively to her bosom*) Leave him! leave him for ever! I cannot! No, I cannot do it! (*footsteps heard outside door, and the latch is moved as by some one about to enter*) It is Job! He has returned! Job! Job! my husband! (*she rushes up stage towards door, but recoils with a cry as it opens, and GILBERT FEATHERSTONE appears on threshold*) Gilbert Featherstone!

GILBERT. Nelly! (*as he advances towards her, she hastily retreats, her hands extended to repel, her face full of alarm.*)

NELLY. No, no, not a step further! not a step! I implore! I entreat! (*she staggers as about to swoon; GILBERT springs forward, and catches her in his arms.*)

GILBERT. Nelly! dear Nelly! (*he places her in chair, and*

kneeling at her feet, presses again and again her hand to his lips, as scene closes.)

SCENE SECOND.--*A Dreary Moorland. Time, sunrise. In distance the works over the pit's mouth, and a few scattered houses. Shouts heard off stage.*

Enter TOPS, a post-boy, lazily cracking his whip, L.

TOPS. Some one's callin'! Well, let 'un call—they'll call long enough 'fore I looks arter 'un. (*puts whip under arm, and walks up and down, stamping feet and flapping arms as cold*) Precious out o' the way place this! I've been a boy at the Shuttleville Arms for nigh on eight an' forty year, an' niver got a job on Bleakmoor afore. (*shouts repeated*) They're a murderin' some one! (*he stands still, and flaps body with arms*) Let un, so long as I ain't the one. I've on'y got to look arter my osses; feelin's ain't paid for by the mile, so I can't afford 'em.

BLINKER *rushes on, R., his clothes plastered with mud, his hat crushed and down over his eyes. He comes full butt against TOPS, and both stagger back from the shock.*

TOPS. Hulloh! Where are you comin' to?

BLINKER. (*pushing hat from eyes*) Comin' to! 'Tain't your fault I've had a chance o' comin' to at all!

TOPS. Why, it's Mr. Blinker!

BLINKER. And I 'ope Mr. Blinker will jist be somebody helse when he finds hisself ag'in in sich a sitiuation. (*angrily.*)

TOPS. If I'd on'y a known it wur you, Mr. Blinker, I'd a done my best to help yer—(*aside*) to holler. (*looking at BLINKER, who is wiping his clothes, and appears to be out of breath*) You've had quite a race, Mr. Blinker.

BLINKER. Race! Damme! It was likely to have been a dead heat with me. But, oh! Tops! I love her! *Such a woman—all muscle! Wish my huncle could a' seen her.*

TOPS. What woman?

BLINKER. She's left her himpression here, (*aside*) and here. (*he alters position of hand, and rubs himself with a rueful grimace.*)

TOPS. Who's she?

BLINKER. Miss Matilda Draggleshorpe. (*TOPPS laughing*) What are you laughin' at? Do you know her?

TOPS. Bless 'ee! Tiddy be known for more nor thurty mile round. She bean't a bad 'un.

BLINKER. She's lovely!

TOPS. Well, theer's plenty of her.

BLINKER. (*enthusiastically*) There can't be too much. I hadore a fine woman. I was struck the very fust time I saw her, (*aside*) and the last.

TOPS. (*looking off*) Here comes Mester Featherstone! so just gi'e oi a leg up in the saddle. I be main toired a waitin', and so be th' osses. (*he goes to side and exits, L., cracking whip, BLINKER slowly following him.*)

BLINKER. She's goin' to London. So am I. Touching coincidence! (*sighs*) If she'd on'y consent to be a Blinker, my huncle would rest 'appier in his grave to know we'd such a biceps in th' fam'ly. (*he pushes out crown of hat, which has been completely crushed in, holding it up as he exits*) And such un-common force o' character! (*as BLINKER exits on L. side GILBERT FEATHERSTONE and NELLY enter hastily R. She is wrapped in a shawl, which she also wears after the fashion of the mantilla over her head. They pause in centre of stage.*)

NELLY. (*Breathless, and grasping GILBERT's arm as he endeavours to urge her onward*) Gilbert! Gilbert! My heart fails me! I MUST return!

GILBERT. (*speaking rapidly, his manner very excited throughout the scene*) Impossible! There is no backward step upon the path we have chosen.

NELLY. Ah! Cruel! cruel! (*she pushes him away*) Surely, of all bad women I am the worst! (*she weeps.*)

GILBERT. (*with a momentary impatience which he restrains*) This weakness is foolish! It is childish! Listen, Nelly! From the time I visited Shuttleville with my father last year, and saw you at the *fête*, your face has been engraven on my heart—an instant had rivetted chains, which an eternity cannot break.

NELLY. And yet you left me without a word of farewell.

GILBERT. My departure was a necessity. Dependent upon my father, I was compelled to make his will my law. He died in Brussels, and I returned to England. Ever thinking of the English rose I had seen blossoming on the desolate moor. I found you again, Nelly; but this time, to my misery, to my madness, you were—a wife!

NELLY. I was an orphan, without a soul to love me but Job. He loved me—had cherished me with a father's fondness—had educated me as far as his scanty means

would permit. Gratitude, my unprotected position, the whisper of cruel tongues, all combined to urge a decision—and I became his wife.

GILBERT. (*encircling her waist with his arm*) Why speak of this now. The time for hesitation is past. I take you to a world of brightness and beauty, where, encircled by a myriad admirers, you will forget that you have ever known this desolate spot.

NELLY. Forget Job! Never!

GILBERT. Be assured he will forget you.

NELLY. Would I could think so, for to remember *must* be to curse.

GILBERT. Tut! Nelly, you do not know these men.

NELLY. Not know Job Armroyd! Miserable girl that I am, I know him but too well—know the kind heart that never beat but with a thought for the happiness of another, that heart in which I might have nestled for ever, but which I am about to leave bleeding and torn. (*she draws back, clasping her hands*) Oh! Gilbert! Gilbert! have pity on me! I dare not go. (*she makes a movement as to retreat but GILBERT, seizing her somewhat roughly by the wrist, detains her, at the same moment the voice of TIDDY is heard off stage.*)

TIDDY. (*off stage, R.*) Nelly! Nelly! (*NELLY starts, and throwing back cloak from her head, turns eagerly towards the voice.*)

NELLY. (*calls*) Tiddy!

GILBERT. (*with a fierce impatience and stamping his foot*) Silence, are you mad? (*aside, and looking off*) Thank Heaven! I see the chaise under the trees! (*he lifts her from the ground, and forces her off, her face still turned and her hands distractedly extended in the direction of voice, which still continues to cry, "Nelly! Nelly!"—Exit L.*)

TIDDY. (*rushing on R.—her costume is much more simple than before*) Nelly! dear Nelly! stop! stop! (*she crosses to L., still calling. There is a loud crackling of postilion's whip, followed by the rolling of wheels as of a chaise departing at full speed. TIDDY's arms, which she has raised in her last appealing cry, fall slowly to her sides*) Lost! lost! (*she staggers back a few paces as if quite exhausted, leans against tree, and holds up a crumpled letter which she has drawn from her pocket*) I found this on th' floor o' th' cottage, when I run back just now to change my gown. She knew it, and yet could say good bye to me, to *him* Oh, Nelly! Nelly! who shall break this woefu' news to

Job? I canna do't! (*with energy*) I wanna do't! (*with change of manner*) And yet I must. 'Twould kill th' lad to coom whoam and no find her theer. I'll go! (*moving to R. side*) Go weer? Down th' shaft!!! P'raps he may feel it less awfu' loike down theer in th' cruel darkness than up here in th' leight which she made doubly broight for him. Yes, it'll coom best fro' me, for—for—(*the voice breaks with emotion*) he knows I loved her weil. (*she lifts her apron to her eyes, and bursts into an agony of tears as she exits R.*)

SCENE THIRD.—*Interior of the Bleakmoor Mine. Varied perspective of galleries and workings, in which MINERS are seen passing to and fro with their mining implements and safety lamps. Basket seen ascending and descending shaft.*

CHORUS OF MINERS.

“ Down in th' depths o' th' darksome mine,
We work thro' a changeless night,
That comfort round English hearths may shine,
And the coal blaze warm and bright,
And the coal blaze warm and bright.”

LONGBONES, DICK RAINE, NOAH MOORHEAD, and other MINERS
come down stage.

LONG. (*after cautiously looking round, takes pipe from pocket*) Eh! lads! who's for a smoke?

NOAH. It be ag'in rules.

LONG. Rules be hanged! Theer wouldn't be no such rules if them as made 'em were down here.

RAINE. Th' overman's up th' shaft. (*taking pipe from pocket*) If we on'y had a light.

NOAH. (*holding up safety lamp*) They keep the keys o' these precious things up above.

LONG. Let 'im! I opens mine wi' this bit o' rusty iron. (*he opens lamp with nail, and is about to light pipe, when it is dashed from his mouth, and the lamp snatched from his hand by JOB ARMROED, who comes suddenly between.*)

JOB. I'm 'shamed on ye, Jack Longbones! and yo', Dick Raine, as 'a worked in this pit, ma' an' boy for nigh on forty year, to set these younkens up to break rules made for their benefit.

LONG. (*contemptuously*) Benefit! (*he endeavours to wrest lamp from JOB, but the latter thrusts him back, holding him at arms length, yet laughing good humouredly.*)

JOB. Dinna sot up your bristles, lad. 'Tain't a rough tongue, nor a dark look 'ull skear Job Armroyd. (*he releases LONGBONES, and turns to MINERS*) Tell 'ee what it is, lads. I dinna wish to see foulk ower foolhardy, niver sin' I stood, just fifteen year ago, wi' two hundred white-faced women about this pit's mouth, to see each time that basket coom up, a corpse come wi' it. I were stannin' as may be here, a holdin' my Nelly by the hand—she wur a little five year old gal then, no higher nor my knee—when all of a sudden, she gi'e a shriek as made my heart stan' still. “Feyther! it's feyther!” ses she; an sure enough it *was* her feyther, as had gone down th' mine that mornin' a man wi', to all appearance, a good thirty year more life in him, an now — (*JOB pauses, and covers his face with his hands.*)

RAINE. Were he dead, Job?

JOB. No, lad, he lived long enough to tek my hand i' both o' his, and pray me to watch over his little wench—now my Nelly. (*turns to LONGBONES*) I was'na white-livered, Jack, but I croid like a child when I gi'e my promise, an' saw a sorter light grow up in 's face when he heered it, an' I an't ashamed that my eyes get dim when I think o't now.

LONG. (*with sudden outburst of feeling*) Gi'e I thy hand, Job! gi'e I thy hand! We all know how thee'st kept thy word to Isaac Bradly, an' what'st done for his da-ter. (*half a dozen hands are stretched forward to JOB, who, half-crying, half-laughing, shakes them all. At the same moment TIDDY is seen descending.*)

JOB. Nay! nay, lads! but for Nelly, I should be nought better i' the world nor cumber.

(*TIDDY has stepped from basket, and now stands at back of stage, speaking earnestly and with an impassioned gesticulation to the MINERS, who group around her. Some of them point to the group of which JOB forms the centre. They retain their places, stand fixed and motionless as statues, while TIDDY comes hesitatingly down stage. Other MINERS come out of the various workings or galleries, and join group at back. A whispering follows—all gaiety vanishes, and leaning on their picks, they watch TIDDY with the same rivetted gaze of anxious expectation, as she slowly approaches JOB.*)

JOB. (*gaily*) Now, lads! to work! If I ha' put out thy pipe this mornin' ye shall score a gallon to my 'count at the Featherstone Arms to-night. (*as he is turning to go up stage his eyes rest on TIDDY's pale and terrified face. He retreats*

a step or two with a cry of astonishment) 'Tiddy! why lass, thee'st gi'en me quite a shake. What brings thee doon in t' pit? I tho'ght thee on th' road to Lunnnon.

TIDDY. (*her eyes bent on the ground, and speaking very slowly*) I ha' coom to speak to thee, Job.

JOB. What's gone, amiss, lass? (*as he approaches her the MINERS fall back*) Thee'st gotten a face like a ghaist!

TIDDY. I ha' got summut to tell thee. (*she looks at him for a moment, then averts her face*) Summut dreadful Job!

JOB. (*seriously*) Nothin' thee'st need to be 'shamed on, I hope? (*he glances round and encounters the anxious and commiserating looks of the MINERS*) What's amiss, lads? Ye all look at me as if — (*he turns quickly towards TIDDY*) Happen all's not well at home? Speak, lass! Why dinna thee speak?

TIDDY. (*with much feeling*) Oh! Job! dear! good Job! thee know'st nobody loved her better nor I.

JOB. Her!

TIDDY. Nelly! (*struck by sudden pallor of his face, she pauses, but as he catches her roughly by the arm, and draws her towards him*) Oh! Job, lad, I canna, canna say it!

JOB. (*in a tremulous voice, which he in vain endeavours to render firm*) Happen she's ill? She's been sore changed for days past — not her'sen like.

TIDDY. (*with an outburst of grief*) She's gone, Job! She's gone!

JOB. (*staggering back as from a blow and drops lamp which he has been holding*) Not dead! She's not dead?

TIDDY. Worse nor that! — for worse — she be gone wi' — wi' —

JOB. (*fiercely*) Out wi' it, woman! Speak! and dinna look at me i' that fashion!

TIDDY. Wi' Mester Gilbert! She be gone wi' Mester Featherstone!

JOB. (*as speaking to himself, his eyes still rivetted on TIDDY's face*) Gone! My Nelly! my — (*he turns suddenly towards the MINERS*) It's a lie. (*he makes a step towards them, pauses, looks from one to the other, and laughs faintly*) I ain't to be caught wi' your starin' an gapin'. Ye'd get the laugh ag'in me 'cos I be one o' th' home birds as like to nestle under th' thack. (*impatiently*) Why dunna speak, some o' ye? (*raises his hand to his throat and tears open his neckerchief, his breast heaving with the endeavour to suppress his emotion*) I feel as tho' th' choke damp had gotten hold o' me somehow. (*he again forces a laugh and*

turns to TIDDY) It's not true, Tiddy! It's spoort—it be cruel spoort though, but I wunna complain o' that—on'y say it's not true, Tiddy!

TIDDY. (solemnly) Its Holy truth, Job. (JOB stands, his eyes fixed on TIDDY, his arms for a few moments retaining their imploring gesture. Then he makes a step or two in a wandering and vacant way, as though he would go up stage. He staggers, and TIDDY catches him by the arm.)

JOB. (with a strange, puzzled smile) Thank'ee, Tiddy, thank'ee—thee were't allays a good gell, allays. (he raises his hands to his face with the expression of one who has been stunned by a sudden shock.)

LONG. (aside to RAINE) He be gone daft, I think.

RAINE. (same tone) Poor, Job! I pity 'un.

JOB. (turning quickly towards them, as having overheard) Eh! lads! dunna pity me! pity her, poor child, pity her! (he stops, his voice becoming inarticulate from emotion.)

TIDDY. I doubt she be gone to Lunnon.

JOB. Loike enough! loike enough! (he again pauses, a gleam of hope for a moment irradiating his face) But, Tiddy, art sure that—that—I canna speak his name. Art sure she were wi' 'un?

TIDDY. I saw 'un lift her into th' chay—an' afore I follered 'em I found this. (gives letter.)

JOB. It be his writin'. I know it, 'cos he were allays scribblin' daan bits o' things when he coomed talking abaat th' mine. (he glances at the paper, then passes his hand quickly across his eyes) I canna fix it no how—I canna read her shame. (he tears letter, and places his foot upon the fragments) He's turned her poor head, the villain! wi's fine talk, an' fine clothes—but her heart ain't bad—she niver had a bad heart, my poor Nell.

LONG. (to MINERS) It be cruel hard to work for such a man.

JOB. (fiercely) Work! I wunna raise hand for that man again 'xcept to be to strike 'un dead!!! (he moves to go up stage, TIDDY clinging to his arm. In the faces of the MINERS there appears an indignant sympathy.)

TIDDY. What'll ye do, lad? What'll ye do?

JOB. (his head erect, and speaking very firm) My duty! I've but one road to take, an' that's th' straight one. I know she be a poor lost creetur—to all but me—to all but me. (he stands in centre of stage, TIDDY by his side, the MINERS grouped picturesquely about, but all with their eyes on him.)

LONG. (*who has taken JOB's hand*) It be a weary way to Lunnon lad!

JOB. (*with much emotion*) The dead a' gotten my word that I'd tak' care o' her, an' I wull. I'll find her were the world twice as wide! (*to TIDDY as they go up stage*) Coom, lass! croyin' wunna help her. (*he steps into basket followed by TIDDY*) Let's be goin' up into th' world—th' world!!! (*he points up shaft. The MINERS, who now crowd scene, all uncover heads as the basket slowly ascends. JOB standing erect, and pointing upwards. TIDDY kneeling at his feet, her face hidden in her hands. As second basket descends give signal for curtain—slow.*)

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT II.

SCENE FIRST.—*Interior of Gilbert Featherstone's Villa, Regent's Park. Evening drawing on. A sitting room luxuriously furnished. Windows at back, through which is seen a snow effect. Doors left and right curtained after the French fashion, also further up the stage, R., folding doors, so placed that by cutting off corner of apartment they partly face audience. A fire is burning in the chimney, L., which is faced on R. side of room by a cabinet piano, open. On right of scene, and near table, a causeuse, fauteuils, and several light and elegant articles of furniture scattered about. FLOUNCE arranging flowers in a vase, which she places on piano, R., while BLINKER, standing near table, L., is seen taking up several folded newspapers, one after the other.*

BLINKER. (*contemptuously throwing down paper*) Times! bah! Public Opinion! pish! The Pall Mall! pshaw! (*same action*) Hathenæum! Well, I never! (*same action*) Ah! here it is! (*joyfully unfolding paper*) Bell's Life!!! When a chap has been a hexile from Halbion for nigh six months he gets to know the wally of a noospaper. (*he reads*) "The Chicken, though his head was now as big as two, and the shutters up to both peepers, looked quite pleasant and lively, and came to the scratch brisk and

smiling." Ah, (*smacking lips*) there's style! When a man reads such writing as THAT, he feels hisself a Henglish-man. (*he throws himself back on sofa, and appears lost in enjoyment of paper.*)

FLOUNCE. What do you find so interesting in the paper, Mr. Blinker? Is it a murder?

BLINKER. (*testily*) No.

FLOUNCE. (*crossing, and leaning on back of sofa*) Something in the Divorce Court, 'praps.

BLINKER. Well, it's much the same sort o' thing. (*reads*) "The Ring! Spirited set to! Interposition of the authorities." (*tapping paper*) This is the reading I like, Mrs. Flounce; no sentiment, or that kind o' stuff, but muscle in every line of it. (*rising*) If ever, I'm blessed with a little Blinker, or, say, half-a-dozen little Blinkers, they shall be brought up on *Bell's Life*, every one of 'em.

FLOUNCE. Lor!

BLINKER. Muscular Christianity—it's all the go, now, Mrs. F. Directly a child can move its fists, put the gloves on 'em. (*he strikes a sparring attitude—sighs, and shakes his head*) The gloves! Ah! I once knew a woman who'd have a been a credit to 'em.

FLOUNCE. (*laughing*) Was she a muscular Christian?

BLINKER. (*enthusiastically*) She were! We met in Lancashire just afore Featherstone and me started for the continent.

FLOUNCE. Why, that's six months ago! What a memory you have, Mr. Blinker. Was she in love with you?

BLINKER. She must a been—she pursued me everywhere. I shall never forget her—never!

FLOUNCE. (*coming close to him*) Never? (*she leans upon his shoulder, looking coquettishly into his face*) Not if you found another such a heart?

BLINKER. Heart! It was her arm! (*sighs*) Such a biceps. You see, Mrs. Flounce, connected as I am, through my late huncle, with the P.R., muscle's a disideratum: I owe it to the fam'ly. Now, you're but a poor weak thing! Too much of the sex, you know.

FLOUNCE. What do you mean, you Lillyproochin? (*shaking him by the collar*) Haven't I muscle enough for such a mite as you. (*she releases him, and he falls back on sofa.*)

BLINKER. (*with melancholy approval*) It's something, just a little. But, bless yer, its nothing to her. She knew how to lay it on. I never shall forget her—never! (THOMAS,

opening folding doors, R. C., looks in, and seeing only FLOUNCE and BLINKER, comes lounging down.)

THOMAS. Missus wisible?

FLOUNCE. She hasn't left her room all day. What is it, Mr. Thomas?

THOMAS. Here's that country gal been ag'in 'bout the 'ousemaid's place.

FLOUNCE. I'll see her.

THOMAS. But she says she always treats with principals, and must see if the missus suits as well as the sitiuation. She's a rum 'un, reg'lar original. (*crosses to table*) Is the *Post* anywheres among them papers, Mr. Blinker? Thank 'ee. (*putting paper in pocket*) I'll just throw a heye over the fash'nabble hintelligents. (*thundering double knock heard as from street.*)

BLINKER. That's Featherstone.

FLOUNCE. In a tant'rum, as usual.

BLINKER. I always know when anything's gone wrong with the guv'nor, he do so take it out of the knocker. (*knocking repeated.*)

THOMAS. Drat the knocker! I wish he'd screw it off!

(*he exits R. C.*)

BLINKER. Featherstone's been out with Sir Frederick Loader all day.

FLOUNCE. And all night. Not that there's much to keep him at home. Missus does nothing but mope. You never come upon her alone but she's tears in her eyes.

BLINKER. My late huncle was a bacheldor, Mrs. Flounce; and it was one of his obseruations, that marriage was like a haction at law, there were sure to be one person dissatisfied. But, talking of marriage, can you keep a secret? (*he mysteriously approaches her.*)

FLOUNCE. (*eagerly*) Certainly.

BLINKER. (*who has made movement as about to whisper in her ear, stops, looks full in her face, and shakes his head*) No, I see it won't do. You've too much o' the sex about yer.

FLOUNCE. (*angrily*) You provoking little — Hush! here's missus! (*they draw back as NELLY ARMROYD enters at side, L. She is very plainly though richly dressed. Her face is pale, and her general demeanour more subdued than in 1st Act. As she crosses the stage, BLINKER exits R. C. FLOUNCE advances.*)

NELLY. You need not wait, Flounce.

FLOUNCE. Can I do anything for you, madam?

NELLY. Thank you, *no.* (*she seats herself beside table, and takes some work, which she is embroidering, from basket.* FLOUNCE is about to place her hand on lock of doors R. C., when they are flung roughly open, and GILBERT FEATHERSTONE enters—his appearance much the same as in 1st Act—manner somewhat more brusque and careless. His type is that of the half foppish, half blasé man of fashion.)

GILBERT. (*who has nearly stumbled over FLOUNCE*) Deuce take the women! they're always in the way!

FLOUNCE. (*bridling*) Well I sure, sir, I —

GILBERT. Pshaw! don't talk, but go. (*FLOUNCE sweeps out indignantly R. C.*) Set a woman's tongue once in motion, and stop it who can. (*comes down stage, stands for a moment in centre looking at NELLY, who continues to work. He shrugs his shoulders impatiently, crosses to fireplace, and placing hand upon chimney piece, warms one foot then the other at the blaze—he still keeps on hat—aside*) Curse this weather! Snow without, and (*glances over shoulder at NELLY*) ice within. (*shrugs his shoulders again, turns his back to fire, still leaning against chimney piece, and speaks aloud*) Not a word! Egad! if you're as free from every other fault of your sex as that of over much talking, you only lack wings to be an angel.

NELLY. (*laying down work wearily*) What would you have me say?

GILBERT. Say! say! Ob! anything! Say you're glad to see me; it's polite, if not true.

NELLY. (*gently*) I am glad you've returned.

GILBERT. Come, that's something. (*draws chair towards chimney, takes up poker and arranges fire, as NELLY, who has risen, approaches him*) Let's get a little brightness somewhere. Bother these coals! They're hard as a money-lender's heart, and no more warmth in 'em! (*laughs and lays down poker*) Mustn't speak against coals, though. But for that Tom Tiddler's Ground at Bleakmoor, Loader and the rest of these fellows would find it difficult to pick up their gold and their silver. (*takes off hat, and, as he turns in chair to place it on table, sees NELLY's face.*)

GILBERT. (*rising*) What's the matter? Are you ill? (*testily*) Must the mere mention of that place always affect you thus?

NELLY. It is not that—not altogether that—but—(*rests one hand, as for support, upon table, the other she presses to her bosom convulsively*)

GILBERT. (*gaily*) Nonsense, Nelly. It's time you banished

such dismal thoughts ; with most of women I've known, a six months' absence has been equivalent to an eternity. I'd wager the've forgotten *you* long ago.

NELLY. (*clasping her hands with fervour*) Would I could think so. I would not have one thought of me linger in their honest hearts.

GILBERT. (*turns away impatiently, and begins tossing over visitor's cards*) Tra ! la ! la ! Always in the same key. A song that never changes is apt to become monotonous. Hilloh ! (*taking up card*) Signora Simondi ! I thought she was in Milan.

NELLY. (*seating herself on sofa*) She called this morning.

GILBERT. (*reading card*) "Signora Marrietta Simondi." (*laughs*) Think of pretty Mary Symonds turning up in this shape. Returned to change her Italian notes into English gold, I suppose. What did the Signora say ?

NELLY. I did not see her.

GILBERT. (*surprised*) Were you from home ?

NELLY. I was indisposed. I—I—did not see her. I did not wish to see her.

GILBERT. Umph ! (*tosses over cards*) Flora Gauzely, Madame D'Alton, Signora Cavallas. Why, here's a perfect nest of singing birds. We shall have a large gathering to-night.

NELLY. To-night ?

GILBERT. Sorry to put you out, but it was only arranged this morning. I want to have my revenge on Loader for the money I lost in his rooms, and, as it's an off night at the opera, I thought we might kill two birds with one stone by just throwing our doors open for a few hours. The house wants an airing, for, egad ! you've kept it hermitically sealed since our return from the Continent. (*he goes towards fire-place, and while talking takes out cigar from case*) D'Alton promised to let you know all about it this morning, but as you chose to be invisible to all comers, you've only yourself to thank for the shortness of the notice. (*leans against chimney-piece and smokes*) And, Nelly, when you are again asked to take wine, oblige me by not saying that you don't like it.

NELLY. (*forcing smile*) But if I don't like it ?

GILBERT. Say you do. The true secret of good breeding is to appear to like everything. (*he lounges across room to piano, against which NELLY is leaning ; he runs his fingers*

carelessly over keys) Why, here's a string broken! Have you observed it.

NELLY. (*still leaning against piano; her face towards audience; her back towards him*) How should I? You know I cannot play,

GILBERT. I beg your pardon. I had forgotten. (*seats himself at piano, and, his fingers still playing among the keys, turns to NELLY, laughing*) That reminds me—you fell asleep at the opera. By Jove! you did—fast as a church! 'pon my honour! Curious, isn't it? You don't play, and you hate singing.

NELLY. (*with an emotion he does not perceive*) Indeed I do not. I used to sing once.

GILBERT. (*gaily*) Once! and why not now? (*turning to music, he pauses*) Ah! here's that thing which D'Alton sings so well—you should learn it. (*he plays an air and a few bars of accompaniment; then sings.*

As flowers to their stem,
As leaves unto the tree,
He swore to cling like them
To thee, poor heart! to thee.
But flowers soon grow wan,
And leaves forsake the tree,
The false one now is gone
From thee, poor heart! from thee;
From thee,
From thee, poor heart! from thee.

NELLY. (*upon whose face has appeared the struggle of her contending emotions, during the singing, utters a stifled cry as of pain, and presses her hand tightly on her heart*) Oh, my heart is breaking! (*she makes a few faltering steps from piano, then, with another low cry, half sob, half sigh, sinks into chair.*)

GILBERT. (*who has sprung up in alarm*) What is this? Are you ill? You are pale as death! (*he stoops over her, but she rises quickly and gently, but firmly, repulsed him.*

NELLY. It is nothing!—a pain that will pass; but—but I cannot receive your guests to-night.

GILBERT. How! (*with rising anger*) Are you mad? Loader, Gosling, D'Alton, all of them will be here in a few hours. Postponement is out of the question. It is my wish! Nay it is my ~~command~~ you receive them.

NELLY. (R) Your command?

GILBERT. (*who has been pacing room impatiently, pauses L*) Be reasonable, and reflect. These people are asked—I'm sorry for it now—but the thing is done. It is our first reception, and, if you will have it so, it shall be our last; but I should never hear the end of it if these fellows —

NELLY. (*coldly*) You have the power to command.

GILBERT. Command! No, no—I *entreat!* For an hour—half-an-hour—a few minutes only. The heat of the rooms—a dozen things will furnish an excuse for your abrupt departure.

NELLY. I obey.

GILBERT. (*with some awkwardness*) Obey, pshaw! (*takes up fan which he keeps opening and shutting nervously*) Use another phrase. I'm no tyrant—nor—(*clock on chimney-piece strikes the hour*) By Jove! it's seven o'clock! Well I've your promise; but remember, our friends are punctual. (*with assumed gaiety*) You will not fail us, Nelly?

NELLY. I have told you I obey. (*she turns away and sinks in chair, R.*; GILBERT makes a step or two towards her—the smile has vanished from his face—and he strikes the fan he still holds fiercely upon the palm of the other hand.)

GILBERT. Be it so; for once, then, I—I—(*outburst of temper*) COMMAND. (*snaps fan in two, and casts fragments in fire; snatches hat from table; pauses; again looks at NELLY, then exits hurriedly, L.*)

NELLY. (*rising*) Oh! I cannot bear this splendid misery. This bitter, bitter burthen of an ever-present past. It kills me; yes, it is killing me, I am sure. (*going towards door, R*) Weal!h undreamt of—luxury unbounded—yet not a friend in this wide world! Not one! (*as she exits R., the folding doors at back are opened, and THOMAS enters, ushering in TIDDY DRAGGLETHORPE. The costume of the latter is much modified from that in 1st Act. she has the appearance of a rough maid-of-all-work, with a considerable dash of country in her aspect. She carries an umbrella and pattens.*)

THOMAS. (*entering*) Here's the young 'ooman come after the 'ousemaid's place m'am. (*looking round*) There ain't no one! Gone to dress, I s'pose; we've no end o' company a-coming to-night.

TIDDY. (*standing on threshold, her hands crossed over handle of umbrella*) Then mine's not wanted. (*she is turning to go when THOMAS calls after her.*)

THOMAS. Stop! I'd better say you're here—they may want you to wait to-night. You can wait, I s'pose?

TIDDY. (*coming down stage*) As I ha' waited ha'f th' day, another hour wunna mak a difference.

THOMAS. I mean, can you wait at table?

TIDDY. Thank'ee, lad, I'd liefer wait here. (*seating herself in fauteuil*) Dunna stan' theer loike a mawkin'. Get off wi' 'ee, an' tell th' missus I'm coom.

THOMAS. (*who has watched her movements with an open-mouthed astonishment*) Ha! ha! ha! Well, I never! Ha! ha! ha!

(*exit c., laughing.*)

TIDDY. (*half rising, and looking everywhere about*) What's he laffin' at? the gawk! Haw, haw, haw! It be lucky I dunna see it—on'y set I off, an' I be like Tom Carman's team—there be no pullin' I up in a hurry. (*she is about to place on floor the pattens she holds, and which are covered with mud, when she looks at carpet and shakes her head*) 'That be loike I allays goin' to spoil somethin'. (*she claps them down on small gilt table by her side, rises, and leaning on umbrella, again surveys room*) It be mortal foine here! If th' missus be on'y ha'f as foine she wunna suit. I been in Lunnon six months, an' a bad as many missusses, till I a gotten toired o' 'cordin' an' uncordin' my box. I think them missusses wur invented to be my tarmint. I canna put up wi' none o' 'em. (*takes card from pocket*) This be the card they gi'e I at th' office. (*reads*) "Y. Z., The Ferns, Regent's Park." I wonder what Y. Z. be loike! I a been through all the alphabut, and am glad I a got to the end on't at last. (*she drops card, and is stooping to pick it up, her back towards door, R., as NELLY re-enters. The latter is advancing towards her, when, raising her eyes, she sees TIDDY's face reflected in the great chimney glass.*)

NELLY. (*aside, and with a gesture of horrified surprise*) Tiddy!! (*she makes a movement as about to retreat, but her strength fails her, and she leans for support against piano, her face averted from TIDDY.*)

TIDDY. (*turns and curtseys*) My service to'ee, ma'am.

NELLY. (*aside*) I dare not speak!

TIDDY. You're Y. Z., ain't ye, ma'am? The Ferns, Regent's-park. Th' lad at the registry-office sot it all down. (*she curtseys*) I'm Tiddy Draggleshorpe, o' Bleak-moor, a Lancashire body. (*she has approached NELLY while speaking, when struck by her averted head and drooping attitude, her tone softens into one of kindly anxiety*) Ye are 'na ill, ma'am? (*in alarm aside*) She be all a tremblin' as wi' th' aguey fit. (*aloud*) Ye are ill, ma'am; I'll call some one! (*she makes a movement as towards door at back.*)

NELLY. (*hastily, but in a low voice*) No! no! Call no one! I shall be better soon, better in my room—don't approach me! (*with face still averted NELLY moves a few steps towards door, R., but her strength fails her, and she sinks, after a vain effort to save herself.*)

TIDDY. (*who has started with a strange confused look at sound of NELLY's voice, springs forward*) Mercy me, she a' swoond! Let me lift ye to th' sofy, ma'am. (*she bends over her, but NELLY shrinks from her extended hands*) Nay, thee must na' stay theer. Be 'na frightened o' me. I be a rough lass, but a coom o' honest foulk. (*she stoops to raise NELLY, but the latter, still shrinking from her, rises hastily to her feet. In rising, she discovers her face to TIDDY, who starts back with a cry and uplifted hands*) Hegh! hegh! It's Nelly! Nelly Armroyd! (*the two women stand some paces apart—TIDDY erect, her head lifted up, and her face full of mingled sorrow and indignation. NELLY, her head bent, seems to droop under the riveted gaze of the other. Suddenly, TIDDY, after drawing a step or two off, moves quickly towards door at back, at the same time fastening bonnet strings tightly. The movement seems to awaken NELLY from her stupor.*)

NELLY. Tiddy! Tiddy! would you leave me thus—thus, without a word!

TIDDY. (*pauses, but remains up stage*) What words can I speak to ye, Nelly Armroyd, that 'ull not be words o' reproach? We a' talked too often together in th' ould happy times for me to trust my'sen to 'ee now.

NELLY. (*with an imploring gesture*) Speak as you will! Heap reproach upon reproach—only stay, if but for a few brief moments, that I may hear the old familiar voice yet once again before I die. (*she presses her hand on her breast*) My heart is breaking, Tiddy!

TIDDY. (*coldly, and without moving*) Thee'st broke a better heart nor either thine or mine.

NELLY. Broken! (*she catches TIDDY's sleeve as the latter is turning away*) You must not leave me, and those terrible words unexplained. Tiddy! Tiddy! if only in remembrance of the dear old times, when two happy children we played together—say—is it my—my —

TIDDY. (*stopping her by a gesture*) I spoke o' one who be nought to thee—as thee'rt nought to him. I spoke o' Job Armroyd.

NELLY. (*removing her grasp from TIDDY's sleeve—draws back—she speaks in a voice of plaintive emotion*) Pardon me! I was wrong to detain you. Farewell! and, and forget

that we have met. (*she comes down stage with faltering steps. TIDDY watching her with a contracted brow and compressed lips, as NELLY reaches fauteuil, upon the back of which she places her hands. TIDDY again turns to leave room, when NELLY, with a low moan, lets her head sink down, so that her forehead rests upon her clasped hands. TIDDY starts, comes a few paces down stage, and pauses irresolutely. Another loud sob from NELLY, and her firmness quite deserts her.*)

TIDDY. Nelly! Nelly! my own dear Nelly! I canna part wi' 'ee so. (*NELLY raises her head with a look of wild, eager hope. TIDDY essays to speak, but her voice dies away in one word—TIDDY extending her arms*) Nelly! (*with a cry, NELLY springs towards her, and the two are locked in each other's arms—TIDDY gently smoothing NELLY's hair, as the sobbing woman rests her head upon her shoulder*) Dunna croi so, dearee! Dunna croi! It be but a wearisome world for us all, an' we mun forgi'e as we hope to be forgi'en.

NELLY. Do not leave me, Tiddy! I have prayed to see no one—to be forgotten by all those who, who—but (*grasping her dress*) do not leave me, Tiddy. (*they come down stage and seat themselves on sofa to L. of scene, NELLY still clinging to TIDDY. It is now quite evening; the stage has darkened gradually.*)

TIDDY. (*tenderly as speaking to a child*) Hush! dearee, hush! You are 'na happy, I know. It's not in natur', for where th' tree war first planted theer th' roots mun be.

NELLY. Happy! My life is one long agony. I have grown to be a fearful thing to myself! (*she raises her head and looks eagerly in TIDDY's face, her hands resting on her shoulders*) You are the same—the same dear Tiddy; while I—it is but six months since we parted—and how changed, how changed, in face and heart.

TIDDY. (*after a pause, during which they attentively regard each other—each holding the other's hands*) He be sore changed too.

NELLY. (*bending her head*) You have seen him.

TIDDY. Eh, lass! but a few hours ago. (*NELLY starts*) He a been in Lunnon these six months—all that weary time he a sought for thee.

NELLY. (*in alarm*) For me! (*she would rise, but TIDDY restrains her.*)

TIDDY. He canna forget bygones, Nelly! He seeks thee everywhere—workin' i' th' day for enough to keep life wi', he wanders after naight fall, fur an' wide, seekin' some trace o' thee.

NELLY. (*in alarm, with wild energy*) He must find none! I am dead—do you hear? Dead to him, to all! (*she seizes TIDDY's hands*) Promise you will forget that we have met—that you have seen me! I would not have him look upon me again—not alive! Tiddy! Tiddy! I entreat—I implore you! grant me this last request!

TIDDY. I dare'na; I a niver told a lie to him, an' I would'na look in 'is face, an' know 'im so bowed down wi' care an' sufferin', an' deceive 'im now.

NELLY. (*with an almost fierce excitement*) You must not say we have met! (*seizes TIDDY's arm*) You shall not go! not a step! till you have promised never to speak to him of me! (*her tone changes into one of great supplication*) Oh! think Tiddy! it is my last request! In memory of the old bright days, that never, never can return, give me your promise! Nay, you shall not stir! On my knees I ask it! Forget me! and oh! let him forget!

TIDDY. Dunna kneel! Oh! dunna kneel to me, dearee! I never contrairied thee in ought, (*with a burst of emotion*) an' I wunna contrairy thee now! (*she raises her.*)

NELLY. You will grant me this boon? You will grant it, you must—(*clinging to her almost fiercely*) you shall!

TIDDY. (*caressingly*) Yes, yes! on'y dunna look so scared—thou'rt white as a sheet, and all of a tremble loike. Come, dearee, canna thee foind one o' thy old smiles for Tiddy? Thee used to laugh at I rarely once—jest for laffin's sake. (*NELLY raises her head and a faint smile rests for a moment on her lips, it passes away as quickly.*)

NELLY. I cannot smile! (*she bursts into tears, and her head sinks on TIDDY's shoulder*) Oh! Tiddy! Tiddy! my heart is breaking! breaking! breaking! (*the folding doors at back open suddenly, and THOMAS appears on threshold, carrying a handsome candelabra, lighted, which illumines scene. FLOUNCE appears at same time at door on left, both stand as paralyzed by a horrified astonishment at the sight of the two unconscious women seated on sofa and locked in each other's arms—tableau.*)

SCENE SECOND.—*An Ante-room at the Ferns. Window showing trees, &c., laden with snow.*

Enter BLINKER (L.) twisting letter in his hands and peeping in side.

BLINKER. Another letter for Sir Frederick Loader! My master and him must be very intimate, to judge by

the quantity of their correspondings. They're always a writin' backwards and forrards. Exchange o' notes they call it. (*peeping into side of letter*) Notes o' exchange, I calls it. An exchange in which, as far as Loader's concerned, there's plenty o' robbery. He's a bad 'un, is Loader—one o' those glow-worm people as shine only by night. Featherstone, now, isn't all bad, though its equally certain he isn't all good. As my ree-spectable and ree-spected huncle used to say, "knavery and honesty are both nice things in their way. Like brandy and water, all depends on how you mix 'em. A quantity of the former with a modifying dash of the latter and you go through the world tri-humphant."

Enter FLOUNCE, R.

FLOUNCE. (*laughing*) Oh! Mr. Blinker, come here and help me to laugh! (*she is about to sink on his shoulder. BLINKER slips aside and she nearly tumbles.*)

BLINKER. Always 'appy to assist a female in distress, but in your case its *quite* the contrary. What's the joke.

FLOUNCE. Only think of missus, (*ironically and with half curtesy*) my lady! hugging and kissing a vulgar creature in a dress not worth sixpence a yard, and (*with intense disgust*) in pattens.

BLINKER. You don't mean it?

THOMAS. (*entering*) She do! It were hawful. My ears stood on end with 'orror.

BLINKER. And they won't go down in a hurry. (*to FLOUNCE*) Compose yourself. (*to THOMAS*) Use phoe-loosaphy.

THOMAS. I resign my place to-morrow.

FLOUNCE. And I go with Thomas. Pattens, indeed! I hope I've a character to lose.

BLINKER. Do you? do you really? You must be a very sanguine young woman. But I'm hoff with this letter.

THOMAS. While I show out the lady in pattens.

FLOUNCE. And with the gingham umbrella. Ha! ha! ha!

THOMAS. Ha! ha! ha!

BLINKER. Ha! ha! ha! (*stopping at side*) Ah! (*sighs*) I knew a weman once—a hangel! She wore pattens, too, and also carried a gingham!

FLOUNCE. (*sneer*) She must have been charming.

BLINKER. (*solemnly*) She were. She'd a heart like butter and a biceps as hard as a flint. (*sighs*) She'd have made

you laugh t'other side of your mouth, Mr. Thomas. (*bell rings.*)

FLOUNCE. That's missus' bell, and clickety-clank, clickety-clank, here's her friend coming down stairs.

BLINKER. (*side L.*) Then I'm hoff.

THOMAS. Haven't you any curiosity?

BLINKER. Not the least. (*aside, as he exits, L.*) Oh, Tiddy! shall we hever meet again? (*THOMAS and FLOUNCE, grinning and nudging each other, move up stage a little as TIDDY enters R.*)

TIDDY. (*without at first seeing them and wiping her eyes*) I ha' tried so to harden my heart again th' sights an' sounds o' this cruel Lunnon that I thou't I hadn't a good croi left in me. But to help an' comfort my poor Nell, I'd—I'd—Theer, (*dashing hand impatiently across eyes*) I'm at it again. (*seeing THOMAS and FLOUNCE*) They shan't see me croi anyhow, though I chokes my'sen by swallowin' every tear. (*she gives a great gulp and turns on THOMAS*) Show me out.

THOMAS. (*sneering*) Doesn't the place suit?

TIDDY. Noa, nor the company.

FLOUNCE. (*bridling*) Well. I'm sure. I'll soon rid you of mine.

TIDDY. 'Twould take a bigger house nor this to hold we three, I'm thinking; (*exit FLOUNCE, L.*) and keep the windows whole and roof entire. (*she puts on pattens, draws about her, and straightens herself suddenly up*) Which is shawl the way out?

THOMAS. I'll show you, but don't be angry.

TIDDY. Angry! What, angered wi' a thing loike thee? I'd as soon think o' quarreling wi' a worry crow for flutterin' its rags in a farmer's field. (*taking out coin and flinging it on ground*) There's a shillin' for thee. I ain't many to spare, but I would'na be beholden to thee for the turnin' of a lock. Open the door! (*as THOMAS is moving to side, she stays him with her umbrella*) Stop! On second thoughts I'll do't myself. Its not for the loikes o' you to walk afore the loikes o' me. (*she thrusts him back, still with her umbrella held lengthways, and passes out with a crushing dignity, L.*)

THOMAS. (*astounded*) Wul-garity!!! (*makes a step towards side, stops, returns, stoops, picks up shilling, places it in his pocket with a wink, and exits, R.*)

SCENE THIRD.—*Exterior of the Ferns. Featherstone's Villa, and picturesque view of other villas in varied perspective. This set should partake of those characteristics which form what is called a realistic and sensational scene. A great snow effect. Scene brightens gradually, as the various windows and distant gas lamps are lighted up. As scene progresses, broughams, &c., can be driven on if necessary, and all the minor out-door details which accompany the giving of a grand evening party. Featherstone's villa has handsome portico, with large practical doors. This portico is placed as to present its front obliquely to audience R. 3 E. Above this portico a window, which remains dark some time after the rest of the house is brightly illuminated. Snow falling in scattered flakes at first, afterwards more thickly.*

BLINKER. (*runs on, L., blowing fingers*) Here's weather! Blessed if I'd send a dog out on a herrand to-night. But Featherstone's no 'art—never had. To hear him speak when he's got on his company manners, you'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. Those hoily, insinuating chaps, they twists and they winds like corkscrews, till once they've got a hold and then—pop!—(*imitates drawing cork*)—who likes may 'av the hempty bottle. (*slips and falls*) That makes the tenth slide I've been down on 'tween this an' Cumberlan' Gate. (*rising and rubbing off snow*) If I didn't come of a strong fam'ly an' hadn't the constatushun of a 'os, I couldn't stand sich a life. If my haunt would only die an' leave me fifty pun, I'd take a public 'ouse, a skittle-ground for the lower horders, an' a rat-pit for the gentry, with a grand set to every night in the back parlour. (*throws himself into sparring attitude; as he strikes out, his foot slips, and he nearly falls*) Keep the pot a-boiling! That makes the eleventh! Another 'll make up the dozen! (*while he is talking, TIDDY comes out of house, R. 3 E. She stands on step endeavouring to open umbrella, without seeing or being seen by BLINKER. As the latter turns to ascend steps, she opens the umbrella with a burst, BLINKER starts back, slips, and goes down*) Complete! Twelve exactly.

TIDDY. (*peering over rim of umbrella*) Who's theer?

BLINKER. (*sitting up*) I say, you, sir! take care what you're about! I shouldn't like to do hanything rash, but a man hasn't had a huncle in the P.R. for nothink! (*seeing face, which expanded into a broad grin, appears entirely above disk of umbrella*) It's Miss D.! (*springing to his feet*) My Miss D.!

TIDDY. (*coming from step, and raising umbrella over head*) It be that little tooad, Blinker.

BLINKER. Fond soul, she remembers me! (*to audience*) Touching fidelity of woman!

TIDDY. What a ye talkin' aboot, ye poor creatur? Happen ye're hurt somewhere?

BLINKER. A rib or two,—a few compound fractions; but as I subscribe to one o' the haccidental companies, *that's* all profit. You've broke my 'art, Miss D. Act honourable, and pay the damage. The werry fust time I saw you—(*he strikes breast*)—it cracked across like a plate—(*sighs*)—one o' the *willer* pattern.

TIDDY. (*laughing*) Then ye must get some one else to rivet it. (*going*—BLINKER *seizes her hand, ludicrous struggle beneath umbrella.*)

BLINKER. I love yer! Be a Blinker!

TIDDY. Lave a lass aloon, will'ee! (*she boxes his ears.*)

BLINKER. Oh! (*rubbing ear*) What a woman! If I could only get such a hand as that in the fam'ly, what a legacy to make over to the children!

TIDDY. (*going*) 'A done wi' your nonsense.

BLINKER. (*imploringly*) Mother o' the Blinkers! Think o' posterity! (*he makes another grasp at her hand, but she avoids him, and exits laughing, R. As he is about to follow her, he runs against MAN, who enters with lantern.*)

MAN. I say!

BLINKER. No! don't say anything—I don't want to hear yer. (*he is rushing off again when he comes against footman holding umbrella over a lady in ball dress, opera cloak, &c.*) Don't apologise; I'm used to it. (*he exits, L. Lady passes into house, at door of which THOMAS appears. Sound of carriage wheels off stage. More visitors appear, preceded by man with lantern, who stands by step as they pass into house, the door closes and he goes off, L.—swinging lantern and clinking money in his hand. Stage left clear for a few seconds. The snow falls more thickly. Lively dance music heard within house. Shadows of guests pass and re-pass lower windows. JOB ARMROYD enters slowly, L. He is much changed in appearance; his hair, which is quite grey, hangs nearly to his shoulders; his figure is more bent; his garments are much worn and weather-stained. He leans heavily upon a staff as he walks, and appears weary and footsore. He pauses in c. of stage as listening to the music, his features lighting up with a kindly smile.*)

JOB. That be a merry toon, anyhow! played by laight

fingers an' danced to by happy harts. An' tween them an' oi theer be on'y a wee bit bloind an' a pane o' glass. Some- how at times it meks th' sufferin' here (*touches breast*) harder to bear. (*sighs*) Six months o' weary wanderin' an' all coom to noght. He be away somewhere's in furrin' parts, they toold me up at th' big house his feyther used to own, an' I are na' been able to foind if he be coom back or no. But I wull! I wull! (*striking staff firmly on ground*) I'll niver gi'e up th' search—niver! till I a' looked on my poor gall's face agin. (*leans against pillar of portico, L., and taking handkerchief from pocket, unfastens knot in corner, and counts money*) Nineteen shillin', theer'd a been the pund, but I gi'e a shillin' to that poor creatur' I coom upon just now doon yonder by th' water—she looked so skeary and desolate that — (*removes hat as unconscious of the falling snow, and hurriedly wipes forehead*) I feel quite sweltered loike when I think o't. It be a dreadful and a dreary place, this Lunnon, for them as are weak an' wi' no hand to guide 'em. (*more GUESTS. The music, which has ceased for a few moments, strikes up the same brisk and lively tune*) It be a great party, this. (*sound of carriage wheels off stage. LADIES &c., cross stage and group beneath the great portico laughing.*) Happen I'll skear them if they see me a stannin' here. I'd best be goin'. (*they enter house. door closes*) Goin'? Where? Whither? (*he is moving slowly across stage L. to R., when, on the blind of the window above the great portico, which has for some time been as brightly illuminated as the rest, the shadow of a woman is strongly designed. As JOB's eyes rest upon it he utters a cry, the staff drops from his hand, he staggers back, his hands outstretched, his gaze rivetted on the window*) Merciful powers! (*the shadow moves, the head bending forward on the hands*) Nelly! (*the head of figure is quickly raised as another shadow [that of FLOUNCE] appears on blind, then both disappear. BLINKER enters L., crosses stage, and is about to ascend steps, when JOB, starting forward, seizes him by arm*) Lad! lad! who owns that house? (*as BLINKER turns there is a mutual recognition. JOB, fiercely, and bringing him down stage*) Thy master! Is he theer? (*points to house.*)

BLINKER. (*alarmed and struggling*) You—you'll s—s—strangle me.

JOB. (*more calmly*) I'll do thee no harm, lad, but I wanna loose ye till ye say if that man be theer?

VOICE OF MAN. (*with lantern*) This way, ladies! This way, gentlemen!

BLINKER. (*struggling*) Help, some one!

JOB. I wanna loose ye, till you answer me! (*he grapples with him, c., as more GUESTS enter L., preceded by MAN with lantern, they cross stage laughing, and enter house. BLINKER, by a sudden twist, escapes from JOB, and rushes into house, closing door. JOB pursues him, but utterly exhausted, sinks, face downwards, upon the doorsteps, the man with lantern holding it over him in surprise, as scene closes.*)

SCENE FOURTH.—*Ante-room at the Ferns. (Same as Scene II.)*

Enter BLINKER, L., pale, breathless, and thoroughly exhausted, like one who has seen a ghost. He leans against side, half fainting; he holds clasped under one arm TIDY'S huge, baggy umbrella.

BLINKER. I feel as if I'd seen a ghost. A ghost! no that's impossible. There never was a ghost with such a biceps. They seem to grow nothing but biceps in Lancashire. Pity I wasn't born there. (*glancing from window*) There he stands like a statue still looking up at the window. (*coming down stage with comic contortions of pain*) What with he and what with she, I'm black and blue all over. Wearing Miss D.'s colours I call it. (*leaning on umbrella and regarding audience*) Now, I've no doubt there's some people as might object to this kind o' thing, but I like it. (*furtively rubbing himself and forcing smile*) It's in the family. It would have done my h'uncle's heart good to see the way I'm wallopped. "Allays keep your 'and in," that were his motto, when arter flooring my aunt, myself, and all my cousins, he'd pick us up, one arter the t'other, as pleasant as if he'd been playing a game o' skittles. (*rhapsodically*) He was a man! Take him for all in all—(*pauses, and with sudden change of tone*)—I don't much care to look upon his like again. (*looking at umbrella*) And this Miss D., is all that remains to me of thee. I held on to it when you sent me down on that last slide. Touching momentum! its like yourself, all wire and bone. I'll never part with it! æver! It shall be my companion by day, and I'll sleep with it under my pillar at night.

Enter FLOUNCE, with tray and coffee, &c.

FLOUNCE. (*comes down coquettishly*) What are you going to sleep with, Mr. Blinker?

BLINKER. (*holding out umbrella*) *This!*

FLOUNCE. *That!*

Enter THOMAS, R., also coming down, joins FLOUNCE in laughing.

BLINKER. You may laugh; but if ever I conduct Miss Matilda D. to the high menial h'altar 'twill be under this auspicious gingham. In every rib of it there's poetry. (*opens umbrella and sings.*)

Some time ago a knockdown blow,
From Cupid's "auctioneer,"
Made that there part I calls my heart
Feel most intensely queer.
And though I own she's never shown,
The least regard for me,
I can't conceal the love I feel
For dear Matilda D.

THOMAS. Did you ever!

BLINKER. (*closing umbrella*)

Yes, I long for married life,
With my Tiddy for a wife,
And a lot of little Blinker chick a biddies.

FLOUNCE. (*bridling*) Well, I'm sure.

BLINKER. (*stops her as she is going up, takes liqueur from tray and drinks*)

Let us pledge her in a cup,
While we make a chorus up,
Of Re-fol-de-lol de riddy-iddy-Tiddie's, &c.

FLOUNCE. Your wife! (*scornfully, and drawing back as he's about to fill, as unconsciously, another glass*) Mr. Blinker, indeed!

BLINKER. If I've offended you, Mrs. Flounce, it's quite h'unintentional, and to prove I bear no malice, I accept your humble apologies. What's in a name? Not much, or you wouldn't be so anxious to get rid of yours.

My name, I know, 'is not the go,
And yet, upon my word,
The name of D— appears to me,
A good deal more absurd.
If I could find that gal inclined,
To patronise B. B.,
I'd soon arrange to make a change,
In that there name of D—.

(*Chorus*) Yes, I long for married life.

(*loud brisk knocking R.*)

Enter GILBERT FEATHERSTONE and LOADER, L.

GILBERT. Which of you fellows is attending to the door?

(exit THOMAS R., FLOUNCE L., with tray.)

BLINKER. *(aside, hesitating as he moves up stage)* Shall I tell him? No. *(with feeling, and watching FEATHERSTONE and LOADER, as they move down laughing to footlights)* I've given my word, and a word's better than a bond with a Blinker *(very merry dance music heard as from drawing-room)*

LOADER. You're in force to-night. Will Simondi sing?

GILBERT. Yes, she keeps her catarrhs for the opera. *(knock repeated)* More arrivals! *(turning to BLINKER, who is pushing aside curtains a little, and peeping from window)* Why are you loitering here? Go down to the hall, and help Thomas. *(aside)* No signs of Nelly yet. *(aloud)* Come, Loader. *(notes of song heard)* That's Simondi's voice. *(as they go off, his hand on LOADER's shoulder, with forced gaiety)* We mustn't lose a note of the nightingale.

(exit GILBERT and LOADER R.)

BLINKER. *(glancing again from window)* There he stands just where I left him! The last carriage is gone, and now he crosses over. *(a loud single knock)* Oh, lor! that made my heart jump! What a hand! *(he drops curtain, and moves timidly to side L.)* I wouldn't be in Featherstone's shoe's for a fiver. *(exit, L.)*

SCENE FIFTH.—*Handsome suit of rooms in Featherstone's house. Decorations blue and white, profusely relieved by gilt work. Furniture rich, and elegant mirrors adorn the walls, so as to multiply the reflections of the vases and statuettes placed about; chandelier depends from ceiling of inner room. The two rooms open into each other by a broad arch, surmounted by a handsome cornice, from which falls velvet curtains, drawn up at sides so as to show table, spread with refreshments, wines, fruits, &c., &c., the whole giving idea of elegant but prodigal luxury. Music and laughter as GUESTS—(all in full toilet)—come crowding in from inner room. THE SIGNORA SIMONDI in centre, on either side of her GILBERT FEATHERSTONE and LOADER—all hold champagne glasses in hand.*

* SONG. *(Spoken, all raising glasses.)*

Bright champagne! bright champagne! bright champagne!
Bright champagne! bright champagne! bright champagne!

* The words of this song are adapted to the tune of "Le Bacchanal," in "Le Turf Errant."

Children of the airy dance,
 Sweet nightingales of song,
 Advance each one a foaming glass,
 To speed old care along.
 Night shade hide th' dullard's head,
 Ivy his brows entwine,
 Gloomy cypress screen his bed,
 Far, far from the vine.
 Gaily the mad old world spins round,
 For care is snugly under ground, crack!
 Tra! la! la! Tra! la! la!
 Life's best fence is a ha! ha! ha!
 Tra! la! la! Tra! la! la!
 Laugh! laugh! ha! ha! ha!
 While the starv'ling miser's seen,
 His treasure hoarding up,
 We quaff like Egypt's dusky queen,
 Pearls in every cup.
 See! our pearls! sunshine nurst.

(holding up glasses.)

Upsoaring every one,
 As in life these bubbles burst,
 They shine! break! are gone!
 (Chorus) Gaily the mad old world, &c.

(As chorus ceases THOMAS advances from L., and speaks aside to GILBERT FEATHERSTONE.)

GILBERT. A man wants to see me! What's his name?

THOMAS. He wouldn't give it.

GILBERT. *(impatiently)* Send him away!

THOMAS. *(hesitatingly)* He says his business is important.
(while talking they have approached side L.)

GILBERT. Pshaw! Let him give his name!

Enter JOB, L.

JOB. Job Armroyd o' th' Bleakmoor Mine! (GILBERT, who has recoiled before this sudden apparition, recovers by an effort his composure, and turns with a forced gaiety to GUESTS who look with surprise on the weather-stained miner, who, without moving his hat, leans upon staff, his lips firmly compressed, and his eyes fixed on FEATHERSTONE.)

GILBERT. *(to guests)* I must beg you to excuse me for a few minutes. I have some business with this person. *(to LOADER)* Business connected with the mine. *(he follows guests up stage, his manner marked by an exaggerated gaiety.)*

When they have all passed into the inner-room he turns to JOB a face which he in vain endeavours to render composed. JOB has not changed his position, but still leaning on staff, stands motionless as a statue. GILBERT, aside, as he comes down stage) An unexpected guest! (*aloud, and with hauteur*) The reason of this intrusion?

JOB. (*by a sudden movement placing himself directly in front of FEATHERSTONE*) Where is she?

GILBERT. You have chosen a strange time. Come to-morrow, and I will talk with you.

JOB. I wunna trust ye. Ye are na worthy o' trust. Where is she?

GILBERT. Suppose I refuse to answer?

JOB. (*calmly*) I be prepared for that. (*taking chair from side*) I wunna lave this house till ye do. (*seats himself.*)

GILBERT. (*impetuously*) How, fellow! would you dare! (*advances, and is about to place hand on JOB's shoulder, when the latter, his whole manner undergoing a fierce and sudden change, springs to his feet.*)

JOB. Dunna lay hand on me! (*speaking with increasing energy*) For months I ha' battled wi' one idea—I ha' fou't it fro' my pillow by naight—I ha' shrunk fro't as it walked wi' me by day. That idea were to kill you, Gilbert Featherstone! kill ye, whereiver and wheniver we met.

GILBERT. A murder!

JOB. Man! man! I fou't wi' it wakin' an' sleepin'—prayed ag'in it on my knees, till I thou't it were conquered. Yet, ha' a care! ha' a care! Let th' touch o' thy hand fall on me, an' I lay thee dead at my feet!

GILBERT. (*who has recoiled before the stern face, and shrunk beneath the uplifted hand of the other*) You come to threaten me?

JOB. No! Listen, Mes'ter Featherstone. Had we met on'y a month ago, I'd ha' made no more o' thy life than that o' some stooat or polecat. It be well for thee I ha' sought other guidance nor that o' my own tortured heart, and ha' coom at last to care for but one thing—to save her. Where is she?

GILBERT. This is neither the time nor the place for such enquiry.

JOB. Is it for you to speak o' time an' place to me? You, who could lave such a world o' brightness an' beauty as this, (*indicates by gesture the luxury around*) to enter a poor man's hame an' set your foot on th' bit o' fire you

found cheering his lonely hearth? Ah! Mester Featherstone! it be little o' sunshine as comes to th' lot o' men loike me, an' you ha' blotted out mine for iver. (*his voice falters for a moment; by an effort he conquers his emotion.* GILBERT, *with an impatient movement, makes as if he would go up stage, but JOB intercepts him. In the eyes of the latter there is a fiercer gleam, and his voice denotes the rising anger*) Where is she?

GILBERT. (*as one who has formed a resolve*) She is not here.

JOB. You lie!

GILBERT. How?

JOB. You lie! Ah! you may frown an' clench your hand. Th' brazen forehead always goes wi' th' hardened heart.

GILBERT. (*with passion*) Silence! You shall repent this insolence! (*merry confusion of voices heard behind curtain*) Begone! Quit the house!

JOB. Answer me, or before your foine friends I'll — *he is moving quickly up stage, his hands extended as to drag aside curtain, when GILBERT, springing forward, grasps his arm.*)

GILBERT. Would you dare?

JOB. (*with fierce excitement*) Ha' a care! Dunna raise th' devil in me! Ha' a care! (*as they struggle the curtains are drawn aside [from within], and the GUESTS, alarmed by the noise, come crowding in, filling up scene with a glittering and animated background. The two men release each other, but retain an attitude of menace.*)

SEVERAL GUESTS. What madman's this?

LOADER. (*crossing to GILBERT*) This man!—who is he? What does he want? (*the crowd of guests suddenly divide, and NELLY, brilliant in diamonds and lace, enters hurriedly; but, as her eyes rest on JOB, she utters a wild cry, and, crouching down as he advances towards her, covers her face with her hands.*)

JOB. (*standing erect, his hands stretched above the head of the crouching woman, as in protection, gazes round at the glittering crowd*) My wife! (*there is a confused murmur of astonishment and a hurried backward movement among the guests, leaving centre group free, tableau, and*

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.

SCENE.—Interior of a cottage in the neighbourhood of London. Large chimney-place, with fire burning upon hearth. Near chimney, L., an easy chair of black leather, the covering in a most dilapidated condition, in this particular matching with the other furniture of room. R. 2 E., an ascent of three steps, small landing with rude balustrade and door leading to sleeping-room. At back of scene a wide window in three divisions, giving an extensive landscape view. River with bridge in middle distance. In extreme distance London. The outline of the great city brought out vividly by a brilliant sunset effect. Close to easy chair a rough deal table. To R. of window the back of cottage forms a deep recess—almost another room—at extremity of which is the door of cottage. This recess has a slanting roof of red tiles—no ceiling. Between it and the long latticed windows stands an antiquated and much decayed folding screen. The whole aspect of the room is one of poverty—such as is seen in labourers cottages. A line extends across recess to door on R., from which some freshly washed clothes are suspended. In front of scene, TIDDY DRAGGLETHORPE is engaged washing linen in a tub on bench—beside her, on the ground, a clothes basket filled with linen.

TIDDY. (*throwing clothes from tub into basket*) That'll make th' sixth dozen to-day! (*wiping arms with apron*) But lawks! when a lass be workin' for her'sen, or for them as she loikes, it do make all th' different. I ha' had enow o' missuses for one while. They nearly worritted oi into a skillington. (*sings.*)

TIDDY DRAGGLETHORPE'S COMPLAINT.

(*The words are adapted to the celebrated serenade in Gil Blas, sung by Madame Ugalde: but it is usually omitted in representation.*)

Weary wi' work, I sink to sleep,
 Heavy as lead my eyelids fall,
 Tra la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
 In my dreams th' missuses creep
 And once again I see them all.
 La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
 La, la, la, la, la, la, la.

Six missus' in ha'f a year,
 Fat an' thin, broad, short, an' tall,
 I took on trial, yet dear, oh, dear!
 None o' th' bunch would suit at all.
 Tiddy, go theer! Tiddy, come here!
 Upstairs, downstairs, "Tiddy!" they bawl;
 Of all the evils lassies mun bear
 Missuses be the worst of all.
 Weary wi' work, &c.

Slushin', sloshin', fro' morn till naight,
 Out in th' frost, th' snow, th' rain,
 Rubbin', scrubbin', an' all becos
 Missus is on the rampage again.
 It's "idler and hussy," if weary an' worn,
 Our brains gets 'numbed an' to sleep we fall,
 They treat us like niggurs, no wonder we groan,
 Bad luck to th' missus! Bad luck to 'em all!
 Weary wi' work, &c.

(after singing song, she lifts tub, and carries it up stage, placing it on ledge in recess) It be more nor a month sin' I ha' set foot in Lunnon, an' iv I'd my will I'd niver see more o't nor I do now. *(she pauses by window, and with a comic anger shakes her fist in the direction of the city)* Ye great black beast! lyin' theer wi' a hump on yer back, as if ye hanna ought but peace an' quietness inside ye! Ugh! I canna abide ye. *(she comes a little down stage, pauses at door, R., listens, then ascends steps and peeps in)* Asleep at last. *(she comes softly and quickly down, her finger on her lip)* A blessed relief for one whose wakin' hours be so full o' pain. "Now th' fever ha' left her, wi' rest an' carefu' nursing," the doctor said, "she might yet be her'sen ag'in,"—moight! *(shaking head)* She ha' that here—*(touches breast)*—which no doctor's stuff'ull cure. Job dunna know how ill she be, he arn't looked on her feace sin' her moind coom back—an' he wonna—but he watches o'er her, bless'm! as a feyther watches o'er an' ailin' child. Ah! *(she sighs, then passes her hand impatiently across her eyes)* I canna think o't all wi'out mekin' a fool o' my'sen. *(as she stoops to arrange linen in basket, BENJAMIN BLINKER is seen peeping in at window, he disappears to re-appear at door, R.)*

BLINKER. She's alone! 'appy chance. *(he enters, and comes down stage unperceived by TIDDY—tapping her on shoulder)* Don't be afeard, Miss D.! It's only me.

TIDDY. (*who is lifting basket*) Hegh! (*she turns sharply round, drops basket on BLINKER's toes*) If it beant that funny little chap as is allays a hankering after oi—haw! haw! ye be for all the world loike a barn-door chick a roostin' on one leg i' that fashion.

BLINKER. (*with many grimaces, and still rubbing feet alternately*) Yes, it's me. I—I knew you'd be glad to see me.

TIDDY. (*laughing*) Thee be'st a droll one. What's thy arrant?

BLINKER. (*with amorous emphasis*) You.

TIDDY. (*with menace*) Tell'ee what! If thee dunna let I aloon —

BLINKER. (*retreating*) Don't, don't hagitate yourself! I comprehend the delicacy of the sitiuation, an' can make allowance for the weakness o' woman.

TIDDY. (*aside*) He be gone clean daft, sure-ly.

BLINKER. Miss D., in all that happertains to the "ring," I'm an authority. Having made the requisite deposit o' my haffections, I can't consent to draw the stakes. Game to the last. It's the motter o' our fam'ly.

TIDDY. (*laughing, and seating herself on bench*) Ha' ye gotten no frien's to tek care o' ye?

BLINKER. (*with solemnity*) Hi'm the last o' the Blinkers! at present. Yesterday I buried the relick o' my late huncle, a charming woman, six feet six in her stockin's. Began her business life in a carawan, an' closed it in the snuff an' cigar line. She took to *weeds* when she lost my huncle. (*approaching TIDDY, and speaking with a slow emphasis*) She's left me her Heir.

TIDDY. (*surprised*) What'll thee do wi't.

BLINKER. (*with dignity*) Heir to her property! 'ouse, shop, an' fixtur's. (*seating himself on opposite side of bench*) Say the word Miss D., and take possession. (*imploringly*) Be a fixtur'.

TIDDY. Lave off, will'ee! (*rises abruptly, bench tips over with BLINKER.*)

BLINKER. (*on his knees and seizing her dress*) It's a bony fidy offer! Capital business! Heverythink in tip-top style—a nigger at the door, and a large plantation of cigars on the premises. My haunt always cut them to order. "If you're only up to *snuff*," she'd say, "you may double your own returns."

TIDDY. (*striving to release her dress*) Loose me!

BLINKER. P'raps you object to the nigger? *Don't secede on that account! I'll sell him, and buy a Scotchman—he's more hattractive if not so decent.*

TIDDY. *(with sudden and startling energy)* Mester Benjamin Blinker!! *(seizing him by collar, pulling him on to his feet)* Thee serv'st that man, and ha' th' feace to talk o' marriage to me! *(shaking him)* What d'ye mean by't?

BLINKER. *(as she shakes him)* D-o-o-n't h-a-g-g-gitate yourself!

TIDDY. What do ye mean by't? *(she releases him, and snatching up hat, which has fallen on ground, bangs it upon his head, in such a manner that it descends over his eyes, then placing her hands on his shoulders, she twists him round, and is hurrying him towards door.)*

BLINKER. *(frantically struggling)* Stop! I'll discharge Featherstone to-morrow—I discharge him now! *(she releases him, he takes off hat, the crown of which has collapsed, and eyes it ruefully)* This is the second as you've spoilt, Miss D. You've got such a powerful way of putting things. *(aside, and coming a little down stage)* Catch me deliverin' Featherstone's letter! *(drawing letter a little way from pocket, then pushing it back again)* After such an hexhibition o' feelin'. *(looks at hat.)*

TIDDY. *(laughing)* Whattens the good o' hats to thee, who ha' gotten no head—poor creatur?

BLINKER. *(reproachfully)* But I've a heart. Don't laugh, my nerves won't stand it!

TIDDY. *(kindly)* Coom lad! I ha' been a bit rough wi' ye, an' I be sorry for 't. *(holding out hand which BLINKER shakes)* Thee bean't th' first honest lad who ha' had a reskel for's mester.

BLINKER. *(aside, and touching pocket)* Featherstone may deliver his own letter—I won't. *(aloud, and approaching TIDDY)* 'Ow about the pardnership? Blinker and Co. *(insinuatingly)* The Co. capable of any hextension. *(stopping her as she is about to speak)* Don't be in a hurry—take time to reflect! I'll wait outside. I ain't partick'lar for five minutes.

TIDDY. *(stopping him)* I thank thee for thy offer, but—*(with emphasis)*—it canna be!

BLINKER. *(in much distress)* Oh! I say! this won't do. I'll call to-morrow—*(following her down stage)*—or—in a week.

TIDDY. *(shaking head)* Noa, lad! it canna be! *(she places*

hand on BLINKER's shoulder as he stands with a lugubrious expression twirling hat, and gazing on ground) 'Thee'st a heart, an' that understan's better nor th' head sometimes, so thee shalt decide for thy'sen.

BLINKER. (*impatiently*) I have decided.

TIDDY. (*without heeding him*) When I wur a bit gall no higher nor that table, I'd for playmate one o' the prettiest little creatur's eyes iver saw. We were allays together, ate out o' th' same bowl, played the same games, an' shared th' same bed. But wi' years th' diff'rents atween us widened more an' more. She wur one o' natur's fav'rites, gotten all t' beauty and grace, whoile oi; like a shepherd's toyke, growed only th' rougher wi' age, but bi'd a warm heart for them as I loved, an' I loved that child wi' all my heart. Bless'ee lad! the soight o' her braight face, an' th' soun' o' her merry voice, wur meat an' drink to oi. She seemed to me a koinder queen, not that I'd iver clapped eyes on one, but I mean my darlin' wur differend all around. *That child be now a woman, an', as I think, a dying one. (laying one hand on BLINKER's arm, she points with the other to room, R.)* She be *theer*! wi' th' whole face o' th' once braight world a darkness to her. The poor birdie who all thou't made for song an' for sunshine, be *theer*. (*pointing again*) Now, lad, where be my plect?

BLINKER. (*with burst of feeling*) Oh! never mind me, Miss D., I can wait.

TIDDY. (*with impetuous fervour*) *Theer*! (*giving him a sounding kiss*) Noo get along wi' 'ee. (*pushing him again towards door*) Had things been different there's no knowin' but I moight ha' consented to tek keer o' ye. (*there is a sound as of the movement of some pieces of furniture in inner-room to R.* TIDDY, *quitting BLINKER, crosses hastily to steps—aside*) She canna ha' 'wakened. (*as she bends her head towards door to listen, BLINKER draws note from pocket, and crumpling it up indignantly, throws it, as he believes, in the fire. It falls just within chimney, and near chair, and is visible to audience, but concealed from those on stage.*)

BLINKER. Phew! That's off my mind! When Featherstone hasks if I've left it, I can "say" yes with a clear conscience. (*going up stage*) Good bye, Miss D. This meeting's hadjourned, only hadjourned, you know. (*he exits abruptly, but immediately re-appears, holding the door ajar, as he thrusts in head and arm, and points mysteriously in direction of fire-place*) *It's there, and that's where they'll all go, if he don't get another postman. (he closes door, and*

immediately re-appears at window, his finger placed to his nose confidentially) It's Blinker and Co. I shall buy the Scotchman on spec! *(he closes window and disappears, blowing kisses to TIDDY, who crosses to window.)*

TIDDY. *(startled, and looking about)* What's theer? I see nought. *(she laughs, shrugs shoulders, and draws curtains across windows)* He is a funny one, sure-ly. *(she turns to come down stage, when her eyes fall on NELLY ARMROYD, who appears at door of room, R. NELLY is much changed; her face is very pale, her whole aspect that of one worn by illness and much suffering)* Whoi, Nelly, lass, whattens left thy bed for?

NELLY. I've had a long sleep, a very long sleep. *(comes down stage, TIDDY assisting her)* I shall be better here. *(she glances round cottage with a vague, puzzled look)* All appears so new, so strange to me!

TIDDY. *(aside)* Her moind be a wanderin' agin. *(aloud)* Indeed, thee munna stay, dearee. Th' naight be comin' on, and th' wind blows in this ramshackle pplace fro' all th' four corners at once.

NELLY. I'm better here. *(she leans on chair back, still gazing in a bewildered way about cottage.)*

TIDDY. *(aside—nervously twitching clothes from line and tossing them into basket)* Job 'na be here soon. He munna meet her—he wunna meet her. He be iron in that.

NELLY. *(with a faint smile)* Working! Always working, Tiddy.

TIDDY. *(coming down stairs)* Work! bless'ee lass! it do oi good. We be'an't all made aloike. Some on us be chaney, and some on us be delf; oi 'm delf, an' precious hard to break, I can tell'ee. *(she laughs, and extends her two red arms)* Look theer! them's graters, ain't 'em?

NELLY. *(pressing hand to forehead)* How long have I been ill, Tiddy?

TIDDY. *(hesitating)* A' nigh a month.

NELLY. So long!

TIDDY. Thee'st been cruel ill, Nelly. Loike to die, we feared, but that be all passed now.

NELLY. I remember a terrible shock; it seems but yesterday; and yet ——. *(there is a pause, during which NELLY appears both by look and gesture to be endeavouring to recall something—suddenly looking up)* This is not Bleakmoor.

TIDDY. *(soothingly)* Hush! dearee, hush!

NELLY. Where am I? *(she goes quickly up stage, and*

before TIDDY can prevent her, lifts curtains of window) London! (she gazes for some moments stedfastly at the distant city, the red light of the setting sun falling full upon her face) The shining city of my dreams—my dreams! Its spires are bathed in light. (as she gazes the light fades from her face, and her voice changes from one of exultation to one of deep sadness) But the darkness is creeping down, and a shadow rises between me and the fading light. (she drops curtains, and turns to TIDDY, who has approached her) Where is Job Armroyd?

TIDDY. Nelly, lass! what be coom o'er thee? I dinna loike to see thy eyes so brait an' thy cheek so pale!

NELLY. (who has come down stage) All is clear to me now. (to TIDDY) Where is Job Armroyd?

TIDDY. He binna here.

NELLY. He will be here! I know it! I feel it! (she grasps TIDDY's hands, speaking in a voice of great emotion) Tiddy, I must see Job Armroyd before I die!

TIDDY. Die! Dinna talk i' that fashion—we mun hope.

NELLY. I've but one hope on earth—but one—it is to see Job! (TIDDY is about to speak, but NELLY continues with a wild energy) I am not mad. I remember all—the delirium! the despair! all. (her voice sinks into a tone of plaintive sorrow) The delirium that has passed, the despair that remains.

TIDDY. It be th' fever that clings to 'ee, darlin'. (aside, as she takes NELLY's hand) It is na that, her hand be ice-cold. (aloud) Thee mun return t' bed, Nelly. (the bells of the distant city strike the hour—eight) It be his hour. (entreatingly) Nelly! Nelly! he munna meet ye—he wunna meet ye.

NELLY. Oh! in mercy!

TIDDY. (speaking rapidly, and with much emotion) He ha' watched by thy side while the fever wur upon thee, day an' naight! when t' danger had passed, he sought work o' some koind—any koind—so he could be near thee. (NELLY looks up with a look of wild hope in her face, which dies away as TIDDY proceeds) For he remembered t' promise gi'en to them as be dead an' gone. He ha' gotten work moor nor ten miles fro' here, but each naight he cooms for news o' thee. (NELLY covers her face with her hands) He sits theer th' long naight thro'.—(points to chair)—an' wher mornin' dawns, departs to labour—for thee—still for thee.

NELLY. Misery.

TIDDY. But he ha' vowed. (*she pauses in great distress*) Oh! lass! lass! that I should ha' to say it!

NELLY. (*looking quickly up*) Speak! I must know all.

TIDDY. Niver to look upon thy feace agin.

NELLY. (*with determination*) I will see Job Armroyd! A month ago I would have fled from him, as guilt flies before the avenging angel—but I have that to say which no tongue but mine can speak—no ears but his may hear. (*she stops abruptly, her head bent forward, her whole expression one of eager listening*) That is his step! (*she makes an involuntary movement towards door, but TIDDY intercepts her.*)

TIDDY. For my sake! for his! 'Twould kill him to see thee so sudden loike. (*a heavy step is heard, passing window, then a gentle rapping at door.*)

NELLY. (*in agonised entreaty*) Tiddy! dear friend! sister! it is for the last time.

TIDDY. Hush! (*she hastily arranges screen, and motions NELLY to conceal herself behind it*) Thee know'st I would gi'e my loife for thine. (*aside, as she goes to door at back*) An' so I know would he. (*she opens door, and JOB ARMROYD appears on the threshold, but without entering*) Coom in, lad! coom in! Thee mun be toired wi' thy walk. It be a weary stretch after a day's work. (*she continues to speak rapidly, and bustles about as JOB enters*) Gi'e oi thy hat,—(*taking hat and stick*)—an' sit thee doon. Thee be'st covered wi' dust loike a miller. (*JOB, who has come down stage with his usual slow, heavy step, pauses in c., and speaking under his voice, motions towards room, R.*)

JOB. Thee dunna speak o' her. Thee'st no bad news, I hope?

TIDDY. No, no, lad; th' change be for th' better. (*crossing quickly to chair, L., which she advances a little nearer fire*) But it be ill talkin' stan'in. I'll get thee a cup o' tay in a jiffey.

JOB. Thank'ee, lass! thank'ee; but I dunna want for nought. (*he seats himself in chair, as TIDDY, after placing an unlighted candle on table, exits at side, L.*) I be raight glad she be gettin' hersel' again. (*he looks towards room, R., shakes his head and sighs*) Her'sen! no that can niver be—niver agin th' braitght happy little wench, whose voice made home doubly home to me, just for all th' world loike th' cricket's chirp on a winter's eve. It were but yesterday, and yet—(*he passes hand across forehead*)—everything seems in a jumble—a koinder dream. (*while speaking he has taken pipe and tobacco-pouch from pocket, and begins mechanically*

to fill former, his eyes the while rivetted abstractedly on fire. Through a change of position in chair the letter brought by BLINKER is now lying at JOB's feet. NELLY has glided from behind screen and timidly approaches him) This be the last naight I shall pass 'neath this roof. It wrings my heart to part wi'out a word, but it munna be—it munna be. (having filled pipe, he looks about for a light, sees and takes up carelessly the crumpled paper at his feet. His hand is stretched with it towards the fire, when NELLY, sinking on her knees besides him, pronounces his name.)

NELLY. Job! (JOB, with a cry almost of terror, springs to his feet—the paper has dropped from his hand, and again lies on the hearth.)

JOB. Nelly! Woman! what do you here?

NELLY. Job! Job! do not spurn me! (she makes a movement as to approach nearer, but he checks her by a gesture, at the same time drawing back a pace or two) Spurn me, then! but, oh! let me speak! (she clasps hands.)

JOB. (speaking, as it were, to himself, his eyes fixed upon the kneeling woman) Spurn thee! No! no! I couldna' hurt a hair o' thy head.

NELLY. You're going away for ever, Job—it is for that I am here. (she rises, but without approaching nearer. JOB's face is very pale, and he grasps the back of chair convulsively as for support. The strong, rough man appears seized with the weakness of a child) Have I lost nothing, Job, of that old happy time? Do I suffer nothing in the knowledge of the terrible wrong I've done you? Oh! think of me sometimes as I used to be, long, so long, ago. Do not think of me as I am—lost to you—to myself—to everything.

JOB. Nelly! Nelly! I loved thee, and I trusted thee, and 't were wi' a sure heart I promised them as be dead an' gone to shield their child fro' harm. I niver thou't to be thankfu' that Isaac Bradley an's wife be sleepin' 'neath churchyard grass, but I be, I be.

NELLY. Job!

JOB. Such a love as I'd for thee, Nelly, words canna tell. I were a'most sinfu' proud a-thinkin' thee caredst for me, an' rough an' common as I knew my'sen to be, thee did'st not despise me. A smile fro' thee, a word, a lovin' look, made our bit o' home a sort o' heaven, till I wur most 'shamed to be so joyfu' 'mong my mates, an' know how many hearts wur full o' keer.

NELLY. Job!

JOB. I used to think thee loike them bit flowers we miners coom upon doon in t'mine, a growin' out o' some wanderin' seed which th' wind ha' blown doon to us; a creatur' o' light springin' up pale an' beautiful in t'midst o' the grimy darkness. Such a flower I had hoped to weer next my heart, an' feel that when my sands were run, t'ud droop a sorrerin' head ower my grave. *(he stops, overcome with emotion—then, with a movement of despair, dashes his clenched hands against his head)* Thee niver keered for me! Thee could na' ha' keered for me! Fool! fool! that I wur.

NELLY. Job! you must hear me.

JOB. *(averting his face)* Dunna speak! I canna bear it! The soun' o' thy voice kills me.

NELLY. I must speak! The words are suffocating me! I cannot—I dare not die before I have spoken, them! Job! Job! I love you, I love you.

JOB. Me! Love me! *(he gazes at her for a moment with a fixed, haggard look, then utters a short, bitter laugh)* Love!

NELLY. If I dare approach you; if I dare raise my eyes towards you, thus weeping tears of agony and repentance, let me implore you not to drive me from you.

JOB. It canna be!

NELLY. A little while—but a very little while longer.

JOB. Theer is a shadder between us—a shadder which no light can pierce. *(she endeavours to grasp his hand, he puts her back gently but firmly)* I am alone! alone! *(NELLY is turning away, her hands tightly pressed to her bosom, when JOB again speaks—this time his voice is full of an eager tenderness)* Thee shanna want for aught the labour o' these two hands can earn—but—we munna—munna meet again.

NELLY. You hate me, Job—you've the right to hate me.

JOB. Hate! *(sully)* We canna change the heart as one moight wish.

NELLY. If a life of repentance—*(she pauses)* Alas! I have no life to offer. I can but dwell upon the past.

JOB. *(his whole manner denoting the struggle within)* Go! go! *(he motions towards door, R., and turns away.)*

NELLY. Job! Job! Say what you will! do what you will, upbraid me. *(she springs forward and clings to him for a moment)* Curse me! but do not let us part thus—other punishments I can bear. *(she relaxes her grasp)* It is the kindness kills. *(she sinks kneeling at his feet, covering her face with her hands.)*

JOB. *(with a burst of emotion)* Curse thee! *(he extends his hands)* I bless thee! bless thee fro' my heart! *(he*

raises her, then draws back) Farewell! for ever! (NELLY moves a few steps in direction of door, R., totters, and catches at table for support—JOB, with a movement towards her) Nelly!

NELLY. (*quickly*) It is nothing! nothing! only I've need of rest—a long, long rest. (*she has nearly crossed stage, when her strength again fails, her hands move blindly, as feeling for a support, at the same moment TIDDY appears at door, R., descends steps, and receiving the fainting woman in her arms. In obedience to a gesture from JOB, she assists NELLY up steps. They exeunt R.*)

JOB. (*his eyes fixed on the retreating figure*) Gone! (*he extends arms as one awakening from a painful dream*) I canna bear it! I wur mad to think I could bear it! Theer be that in her feace which meks my blood ice, an' my heart stan' still. I ha' killed her! killed her, for whose sake I ha' prayed for loife—loife an' strength to work—(*he moves towards fireplace, repeating the last words slowly*)—to work. (*he leans for a moment against chimney, his eyes bent on fire*) I'd best be flittin'! I ha' rested here too long a'ready. (*he takes pen and ink from chimney, placing them on table*) I mun set doon a few things for 'Tiddy afore I go. (*trying pen awkwardly on thumb*) I be'ant much o' a hond at scribble-scrabble, tho' my feyther used to say t'wernt th' writin' were difficult, but th' readin' o't afterwards. (*putting down pen, and taking up candle, he stoops to light it by fire. As he does so, he sees the crumpled letter, he picks it up, ignites it by the embers, and is about to apply it to candle when the writing attracts his eye. He crumples out the flame with his fingers, and approaching the paper to the now lighted candle, examines it attentively—tearing open letter*) HIS writin'! (*he places candle upon table, holds the charred and blackened paper close to its flame, bending eagerly over it, his trembling hands and quivering face shows his emotion*) I'm goin' blind, I think! (*he brushes hand fiercely across eyes and reads*) "I have discovered your prison. I entreat you——" (*JOB stumps his foot with angry impatience, as some of the charred paper crumbles from his fingers*) It be nigh all burned! I canna mek it out. Stay! What be this? (*stoops over the paper eagerly, tracing the words with his finger as he reads*) "At nine o'clock to-night—— must see you—— leave door on latch—— pass light across window—— alone——" (*JOB looking up, his brows fiercely contracted, his face ghastly pale*) I ha' burned the rest! (*raises his clenched hands, pressing*

them tightly on forehead) Oh! Nelly! Nelly! Nelly! *(he sinks into chair, but rises instantly as TIDDY descends steps, R., and approaches him. She stops abruptly, struck by the expression of his face.)*

TIDDY. Job! What is't, lad?

JOB. *(seizing her roughly by the wrist)* Speak, woman! Did she know o' this?

TIDDY. Know o' what?

JOB. *(placing letter in her hands)* I found it lying on th' hearth. It coom fro'—fro'—*(he again raises hands to his head)* I think oi be a'goin' mad!

TIDDY. *(looking at letter)* She knew nothin' o't.

JOB. *(fiercely)* Who brought it here?

TIDDY. Honester hands nor them as wrote it, or thee would'na' ha' found it theer. *(pointing to earth—aside)* This be what that Blinker were a pointin' at. He ha' a conscience, that lad! *(she is about to read letter when JOB takes it from her hand, at the same time the bells of the city strike the hour.)*

JOB. *(who has counted the strokes)* Nine! *(as he turns to TIDDY, there is in his face a wild excitement, almost a joy)* To thy room, lass! to thy room! *(pointing to door on L.)* I would be aloon for awhile. *(he lays his hand on TIDDY's arm as she is crossing stage)* Whativer thee may'st hear, dunna stir till I call ye.

TIDDY. *(alarmed)* Job!

JOB. Dost thou doubt my love for her?

TIDDY. No, lad.

JOB. I ha' sworn to stan' 'tween her an' harm, an' I wull. *(TIDDY exits. JOB, who has followed her to door, stops abruptly as he is re-crossing stage—listening)* A mon's tread! an' coomin' straight up t' path! It ha' stopped now. *(a short bitter laugh)* Ah! I had forgot the signal. *(he takes candle from table, passes it several times backwards and forwards before curtain—replacing it on table, he goes up stage to door at back, and raises the swing bar, which TIDDY has let fall, then returns to table)* Now it cooms up th' path again, straight for th' cottage. *(he extinguishes candle—stage in darkness—the latch of door is gently raised, the door opens, and GILBERT FEATHERSTONE enters cautiously.)*

GILBERT. *(as he advances, stumbles slightly)* No light? *(he comes slowly down stage, as feeling his way in the dark)* Strange? I saw the light distinctly. *(he has reached table)* Here's a candle at last. *(takes match from cigar case and strikes a light. Holds up match for a moment, glancing*

about) A rough cage this for so pretty a bird. (*putting match to candle*) I learnt in the neighbourhood she was alone. (*leans over table, lighting candle*) It's lucky; but where's Job, I wonder? (*as he raises his head, his eyes rest upon the motionless figure, and the stern eyes that are now looking direct into his own.*)

JOB. Here!

GILBERT. (*recoiling as one who has come upon a crouching tiger*) Job Armroyd here!

JOB. (*without moving*) Hegh, lad, wheer should he be but under his own roof, when such a guest pays 'un a visit?

GILBERT. This is a trap! (*draws pistol from breast-pocket of his overcoat, but it is wrenched from his grasp by the strong hand of JOB.*)

JOB. (*falling back a few paces, and placing pistol on table behind him*) Trap! (*contemptuously*) Thee 'rt a man wi' a great estate, on which ivery beast that runs an' bird that flies be claimed by thee. I—(*strikes breast*)—be a poor mon, yet owner once o' a treasure I would not ha' bartered agin thine had ye twenty toimes as much. (*lays hand upon pistol, but without taking it up*) A treasure you robbed me of.

GILBERT. (*with assumed composure*) Pistol me if you will. (*places hand again upon pocket of coat*) If you dare!

JOB. Thee hast robbed me o' that which can niver i' this world be given back agin. It binna in thee to know what she were to me. I be afeard to think o't my'sen and know my loss so great. Young loike her'sen, han'som an' soft-spoken, thee dazed the poor child wi' thy promises an' lies—lured her from her home, an' deceived her loike th' villain that ye are.

GILBERT. (*who vainly endeavours to retain his sang-froid under the contempt shown in each look and gesture of the other*) To what does all this lead?

JOB. Thou hast broke her heart. (*GILBERT starts*) And I tell thee thou'rt a villain! A base, cold-hearted villain!

GILBERT. Job! Job Armroyd! you forget.

JOB. Nothing! I ha' striven hard to get shut on it all, but it be moor powerfu' nor oi. (*places hand again on pistol*) GILBERT makes movement as to hinder him.)

GILBERT. What would you do? Reflect—the law!

JOB. (*with fierce passion*) Law! this house be mine. I foind ye here i' th' naightarmed, I know thy arrand. (*raises*

pistol, What law shall dispute my raight to protect what th' law ha' gi'en me as mine?

GILBERT. (*drawing another pistol*) Beware! I, too am armed.

JOB. (*calmly*) I knew it. I felt t'other pistol when I grappled wi' 'ee just now. We Lancashire lads foight fair, an' gi'e even our worst enemies a chance.

GILBERT. (*with contemptuous surprise*) A duel! With you?

JOB. Why not? I ha' heerd it be th' fashin' 'mong you fo'ne gentlemen to tek each other's lives for a hard word a'most for a wry look. (*his manner changes into one of great dignity*) Had a king worked me th' ill thou hast done I'd feel my'sen his equal—ay!—moor nor his equal, fro' th' very greatness o' wrong!

GILBERT. (*with involuntary respect*) Job Armroyd! I have deeply—cruelly injured you—I will not add another crime to the catalogue.

JOB. Not foight me! (*crosses, so as to place himself between GILBERT and the door*) Dunna think to quit this cottage wi'out it! Why th' meanest felon who robs by th' way side foinds courage, when his toime cooms to stan' th' penalty.

GILBERT. (*firmly*) I will not raise my hand against you.

JOB. I say thou shalt. (*seizes GILBERT fiercely by the arm, as the latter endeavours to pass him*) Thou'st robbed me o' nigh all, but thee shanna cheat me o' my revenge! (*they struggle.*)

GILBERT. Take off your hands, and I will go, never, never to return!

JOB. Will nothing stir thee? Coward! (*he strikes him, GILBERT starts back, at the same moment the doors R. and L. are opened, and NELLY and TIDDY appear.*)

GILBERT. A blow! (*he raises pistol he still holds in his hand. With a cry NELLY rushes forward, and throws herself before JOB.*)

NELLY. Fire here! Gilbert Featherstone, that heart (*indicates JOB by a gesture*) is struck too deep already. (*FEATHERSTONE startled and abashed, lowers pistol.*)

JOB. This be no place for thee! To thy room! (*his tone changes into one of alarmed tenderness as he marks the changing expression of NELLY's face*) Nelly! (*catches her in his arms as she is about to fall, TIDDY also advances in alarmed surprise. FEATHERSTONE horror-struck, his eyes bent*

upon the sad group, remains without moving) Lass! lass! what be this?

NELLY. (*raising her head and gazing sorrowfully in JOB's agitated face*) Death!

JOB. It canna be! it canna be! (*he kneels supporting her, TIDDY stands a little up stage. FEATHERSTONE covers his face with his hands. A silvery light begins to tinge curtain and back of scene, as from the rising moon.*)

NELLY. (*faintly*) Is he gone? (*JOB looks up and half rises as his eyes rest on FEATHERSTONE. NELLY laying her hand on his arm*) Job! Job! look at me! Are you not avenged? (*she sinks back into TIDDY's arms, who, kneeling, supports her. JOB has risen, his eyes still fixed on FEATHERSTONE, his face showing the fierce struggle of contending emotions.*)

GILBERT. (*raising his head, but without advancing*) Job Armroyd, my life is in your hands—take it!

JOB. (*pointing to door*) Go!

GILBERT. (*abashed by the stern, high look of JOB, moves slowly up stage, pausing near door*) If there were atonement possible —

JOB. We canna re-make the past—nor forget it. Begone! (*he points to NELLY, who appears to have fainted in TIDDY's arms*) Ye carry wi' thee thy own punishment, Gilbert Featherstone. (*as GILBERT exits, NELLY raises her head as listening.*)

NELLY. Hush! (*she grasps TIDDY's arm, making movement with hands as for silence*) I heard Job Armroyd's voice—where is he?

JOB. Here, lass, here. (*he bends over her—TIDDY supporting her.*)

NELLY. Job! do you forgive me?

JOB. (*with a burst of emotion*) Forgi'e thee! hegh, wench! but I forgave thee long, long ago!

NELLY. (*looking earnestly in his face*) Job! think of me sometimes as, as I was, and Tiddy!—(*taking her hand*)—you'll not quite forget me?

TIDDY. Forget! Oh! lass! dunna speak such a word to me.

NELLY. (*she moves her hand as feeling for something*) Job! My husband! (*her head falls back.*)

JOB. My wife! (*he looks into her face and starts to his feet*) Air! gi'e her air! (*he rushes up stage to window*) Sh! ha' swound! o'ny swound, I tell 'ee! o'ny that! (*he tears aside curtain from window and reveals the distant city, now*

brought out in strong relief by the rising moon. He is about to open window when a cry from TIDDY stays him.)*

NELLY. *(who has suddenly risen to her feet)* Job! *(she advances towards him, her arms outstretched, he folds her in a convulsive embrace—as he does so her head sinks upon his breast. TIDDY is advancing, but he waves her back.)*

TIDDY. She ha' left us! *(covers her face with hands, sobbing.)*

JOR. But not for ever! not for ever! Though lost in London—*(he indicates by a gesture—the city now bright with moonbeams)*—I shall find her there.† *(he points upwards with a bright, hopeful look. TIDDY kneeling, raises NELLY's hand to her lips as the drama closes.)*

CURTAIN.

* NOTE.—The above explains my reason for requiring a great width of window at back. I wish the great city to appear *most distinctly*, as a background to this last act of the drama. The moonlight view will give a beautiful tone to the scene.

† It is required that the silvery light of the moon should fall suddenly upon the figure of Nelly, flooding it as with a glory. W. D.

MUSIC OF BURLESQUES, OPERAS, & DRAMAS TO LOAN.

NOTE.—Piano and vocal parts are marked p. v. The figures in columns denote the PRICE per MONTH.—DEPOSIT: TWO MONTHS' HIRE is required in the first instance as the deposit, half of which will be returned if the music be sent back within the month.

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Black Eyed Susan, drama, full score	5	0	False Alarms [King] opera, p. v. ...	3	0
Black Eyed Susan, drama dedicated to R. W. Etison, p. v. ...	5	0	Fanchette, operetta, p. v. ...	5	0
Black Eyed Susan, bur. p. v. ...	20	0	Farmer, opera, p. v. ...	3	6
Ditto, 9 band parts ...	20	0	Farmer, opera, p. v. ...	2	6
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Blue Beard, drama, p. v. ...	5	0	Field of Cloth of Gold, bur., p. v. ...	20	0
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Blue Beard [Byron's] bur. p. v. ...	15	0	Fortunio, extrav., 9 band parts	15	0
Ditto, 6 band parts ...	10	0	Forty Thieves, opera, p. v. ...	2	6
Blue Beard [Miss Keating] p. v. ...	6	0	Fra Diavola, bur., p. v. ...	20	0
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Camp, The, opera, p. v. ...	2	6	Ditto, 6 band parts ...	5	0
Cast King of Granada, extrav., p. v. ...	10	0	Happy Man, p. v. ...	3	6
Castle Grim [Roece] comic op. p. v. ...	5	0	Ditto, 10 band parts ...	7	6
Castle of Andalusia, opera, p. v. ...	3	6	Hamlet, grave-digger's song and accom. ...	1	0
Castle Spectre, opera, p. v. ...	2	6	Hartford Bridge, opera, p. v. ...	2	6
Cataract of Ganges, dra., 6 band pts	10	0	Harvest Home, pastoral cantata p. v. ...	10	0
Charles XII, instrumental of song, "Rise, Gentle Moer" ...	3	6	Haunted Mill, p. v. ...	3	6
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